

Faith Grounded in Reality
1 Peter 1:8-12

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1. We continue our series Sojourners tonight. We seek to learn from Peter how to live faithfully in a strange land. Last week, we saw that we have been born again to a living hope. From the start, Peter has been seeking to set the feet of his readers on the solid rock of Christ. He has begun with that which is solid and immovable for a people who have been untethered from this world. Remember, he is writing to exiles or sojourners. People who know that they are not at home here. As such, he provides these wanderers with the realities that assure them they are not lost or without hope. Tonight, Peter will offer us the assurance of things we cannot see. He will ground our faith in reality.

⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:8-12)

In verse 8, Peter begins with a statement that is true of those to whom he is writing, but not of himself. Peter could not say, though I have not seen him because, remember, he had seen him. Why do I point that out? Because it is actually an essential point to remember. We are not studying the philosophical speculations of a spiritual guru here. We are not listening to the verbose musings of a erudite college professor. Neither are we are not listening to someone who had just had very spiritual encounters with the invisible God. This is not just a New Age, pantheistic message about the All-spirit or something like that, tapping into some numinous, transcendental experience with the unseen.

Rather, the author of this letter had seen Jesus. He had lived with Him. He had seen Jesus give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, and life to the dead. He had seen the lame dancing after being healed by Jesus. He had seen Jesus walking on water, feeding 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish, calming a mighty storm with a word. He had seen Jesus transfigured before his very eyes, His face shining like the sun, and his robes whiter than white. He had witnessed these miracles, but he had also witnessed the one miracle that changes everything. Peter had seen the Lord risen from the dead. Don't take my word for it, take the Scriptures, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in

accordance with the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

Cephas, that's Peter, saw Jesus multiple times after His resurrection. He walked with the risen Lord. He had breakfast with the risen Lord. He watched as the risen Lord returned to His glory and disappeared into the clouds.

From that point on, in the sovereign plan of God, Jesus would be invisible to all, until He comes again. If you are struggling to trust the Lord because you can't see Him, you need to understand this. We walk by faith and not by sight. God has determined in His perfect wisdom that the way in which we are saved is through faith in His Son, whom we have not seen. You can love Him without having seen Him because Peter and rest of the twelve saw Jesus, and at one point, Jesus appeared to 500 people. That is irrefutable historical reality. In a court of law, the evidence of two or three witnesses is sufficient to render a verdict. God has given us over 500 witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus because He so longs for us to know the truth.

In the second statement, what Peter says *is* true of himself and all believers. **Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (1 Peter 1:8b)** This is the present condition of all who believe in Jesus. We believe, though we do not see. I know this is stating the obvious, but sometimes the obvious is overlooked and taken for granted. The fact that you cannot see Jesus, rather than causing you to doubt, should be the source of the greatest blessing and joy in your life. There is a very good reason you cannot see Him.

Peter grasped this, which is why he connects the fact that we cannot see Jesus with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. That joy comes from knowing where Jesus is! It comes from believing that Jesus is seated in the place of highest honor, at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Having died for our sins, and having been raised from the dead, the Father exalted Him to a place which no eye can see as our forerunner. He has gone there as the one Mediator between God and man. He has gone there as our great and merciful High Priest, so that we can draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25)

Until you realize that this is the reason you do not now see Jesus, you are missing out on the most mind-blowingly awe-inspiring, mind-transforming, heartwarming, and will-conforming reality of the gospel. This is why Jesus told His disciples that it was to their advantage that He go away. Why do you think Moses and Elijah conversed with Jesus about His exodus from this earth when they came to Him at His transfiguration? Because it was through His departure, His exodus from this world, that we are delivered from this world into the glories of His eternal Kingdom. It is the finished work that He accomplished in leaving this world that makes the outcome of our faith possible. Which leads to the next verse.

obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:9)

The word outcome is the Greek word *telos*. It is a very important word in the New Testament. It means end, but not just end as in the end, it's over. It carries much more meaning than that. When used in connection with Christ and our salvation, the word carries the idea of God's predetermined purpose brought to completion in time. To borrow Peter's own words, it is that which has occurred according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. (Acts 2:23) So the word is connected with the plans of God. The telos of our faith, the God-ordained and foreknown end and outcome of our faith is the salvation of our souls.

Do you want assurance of your salvation? Look no further than this. Assurance comes from grounding your faith in the reality of God's eternal purpose, not in mustering up your own strength to believe. You don't get assurance from yourself. You can't give yourself this assurance. It can only be received from God. You receive it when you understand that the outcome of your faith is secure and unchangeable because it is according to the unchangeable plan of God, not your own willpower, which is constantly changing. It comes from knowing the eternal strength and might of the one in whom you trust, not from your own feeble strength or ability.

Peter had this assurance *because* he no longer saw Jesus, and he so longed for those to whom he wrote to receive it as well. So, he couldn't leave this statement without further explanation. These next few verses are an exposition of how we can know that God's plans have been fulfilled in Christ Jesus. These verses give us a 20,000-foot aerial view of God's great and marvelous plan. One of our great problems in life is our inability to see things from God's perspective. We miss the forest for the trees. We look at life from down here on earth, and we see our problems, our trials, our sufferings, our pain, our sickness, our loss, our grief and sorrow, our persecutions, and the list goes on. We see all these things, but we fail to see them from God's point-of-view. From a heavenly perspective, all these trials and tribulations are but a part of the Father's great and glorious plan: this salvation!

Do you want to see your life fitting into the bigger picture of God's plans and purposes for the whole of His creation? Look no further than verses 10-12 of 1 Peter 1. Let's read them again.

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Notice what Peter is doing here. He is grounding this salvation in history. He is grounding it in Scripture, divine revelation. He is providing us with proof of this salvation. When God says that He has left all men without an excuse, He means it. He has gone to incredible lengths to leave every human being who has ever existed without an excuse for not worshiping Him and giving Him the glory He deserves. Paul tells us that creation itself leaves us without excuse because it declares to everyone God's eternal power and divine nature (Romans 1:20). Simply by being a

human being living on this planet that God has made in the midst of the vast expanse of the heavens, God has provided you with ample evidence that you ought to seek after Him with your whole heart.

But here, Peter provides us with the strongest proof of all. This is the proof of prophecy. These three verses give us perhaps the fullest exposition of the how and the why of Old Testament prophecy. Peter is explaining the ultimate purpose of the Old Testament, which is to point to Jesus Christ and give Him glory.

Consider these prophets. Consider what God did for them and through them. There is a harmony between what God did and what they did. What did they do? They searched and inquired carefully. This is faith. Faith is more than simply believing that God exists; it is seeking after Him and inquiring about His ways! What did God do? He revealed His plans.

Here is the promise God has made to us. He has promised to reveal Himself and His salvation to all who seek Him. If you don't find God in this life, it is simply because you refused to seek Him. You have only yourself to blame. Jesus put this very simply for us: ⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:7-11) God does not hide from those who seek Him! He has revealed His will, which is that you would be saved. If you are not saved, it is because you are running from Him. You are willingly turning away, like a stubborn ox, from the one who has revealed Himself to you. What God has purposed and planned; He has also been pleased to reveal to those who seek Him. This is true today, but it was also true before Christ ever came into this world.

The central theme of all history is this salvation! Peter is declaring that there has never been a moment in history when God was not pointing those who seek Him to this salvation. This has been the theme of the Holy Spirit's message since the very beginning, going all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Adam sinned. The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit, and He has been testifying about Jesus since the beginning of creation.

The word translated as predicted in verse 11 is *promarturomenon*, and this is the only place the word occurs in the New Testament. Predicted is really not the greatest translation, because it doesn't capture the full meaning of the word. We can predict something. For instance, I could predict that the Tarheels will win the NCAA championship this year, and it might happen. But if it did happen, it didn't happen because I predicted it. I just happened to guess right. But I cannot *promarturomai* something. This is something only God Himself can do. God alone can bear witness about things that are yet to take place because He alone has foreknown and planned things that are to take place.

Do you want some examples of the Spirit of Christ bearing witness beforehand about the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories? It all started in the Garden of Eden. The Holy Spirit revealed to Moses, the author of Genesis, that God Himself promised a Savior in the hearing of Adam and Eve. God told the serpent that the seed of the woman would crush his head, while he would bruise his heel. There you have the message of the cross in embryo. The cross was the bruising of the heel of the Son of Man, but it was the crushing of the head of the serpent.

From the first time the gospel was proclaimed and announced, the Holy Spirit foretold the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories down through every generation. He did this many times and in many ways. He did it in the days of Noah through the flood and the ark. The ark was a shadow of the Savior to come. Through faith, Christ is a refuge from the destruction that is to come upon this world. In the days of Abraham, the Spirit foretold these things perhaps most clearly through his son Isaac, the humble son of sacrifice. Jesus said, Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad. (John 8:56) How did he see Jesus' day? The Holy Spirit foretold these things. In the days of Joseph, He foretold it by turning the evil plans of his brothers into good. The sufferings of Joseph leading to his exaltation were a dim shadow of the sufferings of Christ to come.

In the days of Moses, He foretold these things in a great variety of ways. The Exodus from Egypt was a shadow of Christ's death and resurrection, leading to our deliverance from death. We are brought out of slavery to sin into the freedom of Christ. The Passover lamb that was slain was a shadow of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, so that the judgment of God can Passover us. The manna from heaven was a shadow of Christ, the true bread of heaven. The water from the rock was a shadow of the rivers of living water that would flow from the heart of every believer on account of the sufferings of Christ. Every detail of the law given to Moses found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the Ten Commandments, and every moral precept of the Law perfectly as the Son of Man. His righteousness on earth was the fulfillment of God's moral law. He obeyed in our place so that His righteousness could be imputed and imparted to us who have disobeyed. His death on the cross was the fulfillment of every sacrifice.

In the days of Joshua, He foretold that Christ would be the captain of our salvation, leading us into the promised land of His eternal Kingdom. Christ was foreshadowed in the scarlet thread that hung from Rahab's window in Jericho. He saves Jew and Gentile alike through faith in His scarlet blood. In the days of the Judges, He foretold time and again that God would raise up a deliverer for a people who had turned from Him to do what was right in their own eyes. Even in those dark days, God raised up judges who foreshadowed the Judge who was to come, who would suffer in our place rather than bringing the swift sword of justice upon us as we deserve. In the days of Ruth, He foretold that Christ would be our kinsman-redeemer, our husband who redeems us from the curse of the law, and makes us members of the household of God.

In David's day, He foretold that the true King of Israel would be a man after God's own heart. The true King would be meek and mild, yet awesome in power. He would be the offspring of

David, who's reign would never end. He would stand as one man against our Goliath, the devil, and He would defeat Him through death itself. He would be a conquering and victorious king, while at the same time being hated and encompassed by many enemies, betrayed by one of his closest friends, and forsaken by His God, specifying the exact details of Christ's death in Psalm 22. He also foretold that He would ascend to heaven and take his seat at the right hand of the Father as our priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Psalm 110)

To Isaiah, He foretold that he would be born of a virgin, and that He would be the suffering servant, pierced for our transgressions. To Jeremiah, He foretold that He would establish a New Covenant, wherein He would write the law of God on the peoples' hearts, and forgive their sins. To Ezekiel, He foretold that He would breathe life into dry bones and put a heart of flesh in His people. To Daniel, He foretold that He would be the Son of Man, the Ancient of Days, whose dominion would be an everlasting dominion, and He even foretold a precise timetable of the days leading up to the Messiah's first appearing, when He would come and be cut off, rejected by His own people.

To Hosea, He foretold that the Messiah would betroth to Himself an adulteress bride in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and in mercy, redeeming her from her polluted ways. (Hosea 2:19) He would have mercy on No Mercy, and He would say to Not My People, "You are My people," and they would say, "You are my God."

To Joel, He foretold that the Messiah would pour the Holy Spirit out on all flesh, from the least to the greatest, and that He will judge the nations.

To Amos, He foretold that the Day of the Lord would be darkness and not light, that justice would roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Indeed, that is a fitting description of what took place when Jesus' was crucified.

To Obadiah, He foretold that the Messiah would destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring low the mighty pride of men.

To Jonah, He foretold that the Son of Man would be three days and nights in the belly of the earth, just as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of a fish. Afterward, the Gentiles would be brought to repentance.

To Micah, He foretold that the Christ would be born in humble Bethlehem, and that He would tread all our iniquities underfoot, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

To Nahum, He foretold that He would break the yoke of the afflicted, and burst their bonds apart. He would bring good news and publish peace, while cutting off and making a complete end of the adversaries.

To Habakkuk, He foretold that the righteous would live by faith on account of the work of the Messiah.

To Zephaniah, He foretold that people from all the nations would call upon the name of the Lord and serve Him with one accord, that a people humble and lowly would seek refuge in the name of the Lord, and that the Lord would take away the judgments against them, and rejoice over them with gladness.

To Haggai, He foretold that the Messiah would be the offspring of Zerubbabel, and that He would truly restore the glory of the house of the Lord, and that the latter glory of the house of the Lord would be greater than the former, and that He would give peace.

To Zechariah, He foretold that the Messiah would be a righteous branch, a high priest who would remove the iniquity of the land in a single day. He foretold that the Messiah would come as a king with righteousness and salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, and that He would pour out a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him.

To Malachi, He foretold that a messenger, John the Baptist, would be sent to prepare the way before the Messiah, and that the Messiah would be a refiner and a purifier, and that in His day the sun of righteousness would rise with healing in its wings.

That is just a cursory glance at the many times and many ways that God spoke to His people by the prophets about the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to each of these prophets that they were serving not themselves but us to whom these things have now been *announced!* The verbs here are incredibly important. What was *foretold* has now been *announced* to us by the same Holy Spirit through those who preached the good news. What has changed? Simply the fact that the things that were foretold have now happened! Christ has suffered and entered into His glory!

In a world that is desperate to hear good news, this announcement rings out to give peace and joy to those who have no hope. It is an announcement of victory, but not just any victory, the victory of God! Christ suffered, once for all, and after that came judgment. What was the judgment God rendered concerning the sufferings of His Holy Son? It was the most glorious judgment of all. On the third day, He was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead. God the Father declared that the sufferings of His Son brought victory over sin and death. He declared that all who believe in His Son will be counted as righteous and given a share in the glory.

[Righteousness] will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. (Romans 4:24b-25)

Not only did He secure our righteousness by His suffering, but He also secured our sanctification. Ten days after He ascended on high, the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven. That was a part of the subsequent glory. The Spirit of God, the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the

dead, descended upon the believers and made His abode within them. They were sanctified by His presence. That is not all, before He left, the Son of God told His disciples that He would return. He told them that He would descend from Heaven with a mighty trumpet blast and they would be caught up into the clouds to be with Him forever. The dead in Christ would rise from their graves first, and then those still alive on this earth would be transformed and caught up together with them. Oh yes, the subsequent glories! We eagerly await that glorious day.

It's no wonder that these are things into which even the holy angels long to look. This may be one of the most amazing revelations of the Scriptures. The angels, who dwell in the very presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, who were witnesses of creation, stoop down, as it were, and peer over the veil of heaven to look into this salvation. This is the marvel of angels!

Consider them, looking on as Jesus was born in Bethlehem. They were there heralding His birth to the shepherds. Consider them attending Him in the wilderness after He overcame the devil's temptations. They had never seen anything like it. Who was this man so righteous that He could even withstand the direct onslaught of the devil in hunger and weakness? Consider them looking on as He was despised and rejected by men, and hung upon a tree as a curse. Marvel of marvels, they had never seen such a drama unfold. Consider them standing there at the tomb that glorious morning that He rose, heralding His resurrection to those who had been held in the grip of the devil through fear of death. Consider them escorting Him back to His throne in Heaven as our risen Champion, to take His seat at the Father's right hand and reign until every enemy has been humbled beneath His feet. Consider them looking on as the Holy Spirit was sent on Pentecost to transform those fearful disciples and set their tongues ablaze with this good news that would change the world. Consider their awe and rejoicing as they watch God make sinners righteous by His grace. Consider them even now, as I speak, ministering to us and serving us who are to inherit salvation.

Indeed, this gospel contains the unsearchable riches of Christ. God has purposed through the preaching of this gospel **to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:9-10)** It is through us, through what Christ has done for us and continues to do in us, that God has made known his manifold wisdom.

What about you? Does your heart burn within you as you hear this glorious message that the angels long to look into? Do you long to look into it? The world is looking for drama today. Oh, how much time, energy, and resources we spend seeking to produce and consume drama. All the while, the greatest story ever told, the story that thrills the angels, the story the prophets searched and inquired into diligently, is so often neglected. What do you make of this salvation? If this message does not excite you and cause you to wonder with childlike wonder, there can only be one explanation, and that is that you are utterly blind. It is simply that you cannot see it. The god of this world has blinded your mind to keep you from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Oh, I pray that we all, with unveiled face would behold the glory of the Lord tonight. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. When you turn to the Lord, the veil is removed and you can see! If you want to know the freedom and joy that comes from seeing the Lord, turn to Him tonight and simply believe what has been delivered to you. When you believe and confess this truth that Jesus is Lord, you are transformed. This is reality. If you ground your faith on the reality of this salvation, you will never be confounded. You will never be put to shame. You will rejoice with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.