

LIVING HOPE - BUILT ON THE WORD | 2 Peter 1:12-21

Introduction

There are moments in life when you realize that what you're building on matters just as much as what you're building.

Jesus actually used that picture when He talked about two builders. One built his house on rock. The other built his house on sand. And when Jesus' original audience heard that illustration, they understood something about the ground beneath their feet.

In the region where Jesus ministered, much of the land was limestone country. On the surface there could be layers of loose soil and sand, but underneath was solid limestone bedrock.

So a careful builder couldn't simply find a piece of ground that looked solid and start building. He had to dig.

In Luke's account, Jesus says the wise builder **"dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock."**

He dug through the loose material until he reached something solid enough to carry the weight of what he was about to build.

And here's what makes Jesus' illustration so powerful. During the dry season, two pieces of ground could both appear stable. Two houses could be built, and from the outside they might look almost identical.

The difference was underneath. One builder stopped where it was easy. The other kept digging until he reached something that wouldn't move.

Then the rain came. The water rose. The ground shifted. And suddenly, what had been invisible became the most important part of the house.

The storm didn't create the foundation. The storm revealed it.

Church, that's true of our lives too. Every one of us is building something. We're building our understanding of truth on something. We're building our decisions on something. We're building our marriages, our families, our identities, our values, and our hopes on something.

The question isn't **whether you're building**. The question is **what are you building on?**

Because eventually life gets heavy. Pressure comes. Circumstances change. Someone disappoints you. Your feelings tell you one thing while truth tells you another. And when the ground begins to move, what determines whether we remain standing isn't how impressive everything looked above the surface. It's what we built underneath it.

In our passage tonight, Peter points the church toward bedrock—something that doesn't shift every time the world around us does.

The Word of God.

If we're going to build a life that stands, we need a foundation strong enough to carry the weight of our lives.

Scripture Reading - 2 Peter 1:12-21 (NIV)

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³ I think it is right

to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴ because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. ¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."^[a] ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 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. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ 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.

Historical Context

What makes this passage especially powerful is where Peter is in his life when he writes it. Peter knows he's approaching the end. Peter knows he isn't going to be there forever.

Think about who this is. Peter walked with Jesus. He heard Jesus teach. He watched Him perform miracles. He stood at the empty tomb. He saw the risen Christ. He preached at Pentecost.

For decades, Peter's voice had helped strengthen the church. But now Peter knows his voice will soon become silent.

So what's going to keep the church grounded when Peter is gone? That's the urgency underneath this passage.

Peter is preparing believers to stand when he is no longer there to remind them. Leaders come and go. Generations come and go. Cultures change. False teachers arise. Human memory fades. But God has given His people something that remains.

Fallen Condition Focus

And this is where the passage confronts us. Because our tendency is to build our lives on voices that were never strong enough to carry the weight of our lives.

- Sometimes we build on our feelings: *"I feel like this must be right."*
- Sometimes we build on popular opinion: *"Everybody seems to believe this."*
- Sometimes we build on experience: *"This is what I've always known."*
- Sometimes we even build our faith too heavily on another person: *"My pastor says..." "My parents taught me..." "This person I trust believes..."*

Those voices aren't necessarily bad. God uses people, wisdom, experience, and emotion. But none of them are ultimate.

Our feelings can change. People can be wrong. Culture can shift. And even the greatest spiritual leaders eventually leave us. Peter knew that. So before he dies, he points the church beyond Peter.

Our faith was never meant to rest on the person holding the microphone.

Pastors can help you understand the Word. Teachers can help you study the Word. Parents can teach you the Word. But none of us can become a substitute for the Word.

We need something more reliable than another person's voice. We need something that doesn't change when culture changes, doesn't collapse when our emotions change, and doesn't disappear when a leader is gone.

Big Idea: When everything else shifts, God's Word stands.

Our confidence isn't rooted in wishful thinking. Christianity isn't built on myths somebody invented. And Scripture isn't merely the collected religious opinions of human beings.

Peter is going to show us why God's Word is worthy of our trust—and why it is strong enough to build our lives upon.

Point One - The Word Is Grounded in Eyewitness Testimony

2 Peter 1:16–18

Peter begins with an extraordinary statement: *“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”*

Peter knows exactly what is at stake. He's preparing to die, false teachers are beginning to influence the church, and Peter wants these

believers to know that the message they've received isn't something the apostles made up.

He says, **"We did not follow cleverly devised stories."** In other words, *We didn't invent this.*

Christianity isn't built on a legend that developed over generations. Peter is saying, *I was there. I saw Him.*

And notice the word he uses: **eyewitnesses.**

Peter isn't passing along something he heard from someone who heard it from someone else. He's giving firsthand testimony.

But then Peter gets even more specific. He takes them back to one particular moment in his life with Jesus. Verse 17 says: *"He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"*

Peter is remembering the Transfiguration.

Matthew 17 tells us that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. There, right in front of them, Jesus was transfigured. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became as white as light. Moses and Elijah appeared. And then a cloud covered them and the voice of the Father declared the identity of His Son.

Imagine being Peter. He didn't read about that moment. He stood there. He saw the glory of Christ with his own eyes. He heard the voice of the Father with his own ears. And decades later, approaching the end of his life, Peter hasn't changed his story.

He says in verse 18: *"We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."*

Church, Our faith isn't built on cleverly invented stories. **It's rooted in God's action in history.** Jesus really lived. Peter really followed Him. The disciples really encountered Him. And Peter is willing to go to his grave declaring that what he told the church about Jesus is true.

But here's what's fascinating. Peter is about to die. The eyewitnesses won't always be there.

Eventually, there will be generations of Christians who never stood on that mountain, never heard Jesus preach beside the Sea of Galilee, and never looked into the empty tomb. That includes us. So what do we have? Peter moves from what **he saw** to what **God has spoken**. And remarkably, he tells us we have something completely reliable.

Point Two - The Word Is a Light in a Dark World

2 Peter 1:19 Look at verse 19: *"We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it..."*

Don't miss Peter's confidence. **Completely reliable.**

Peter has just described one of the greatest spiritual experiences imaginable. He stood on a mountain and saw the glory of Jesus Christ unveiled before his eyes.

And yet he doesn't tell the church, *"I wish you could have experienced what I experienced."* He points them to the Word.

That's important because sometimes we can begin believing that what we really need is another experience.

If God would just show me something. If I could just see a miracle. If I could just have some unmistakable sign.

Peter had the mountaintop experience! And yet as he's preparing the church for life without him, he doesn't tell them to spend their lives chasing his experience.

He tells them to **Pay attention to God's Word.**

Church, experiences can be powerful, and God can use them. But experiences have to be interpreted. Feelings have to be discerned. Memories can fade. **The Bible gives us something outside ourselves that we always return to.**

Then Peter gives us this beautiful picture. He says to pay attention to the Word: *"...as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."*

That's what Scripture is. **A light shining in a dark place.**

Notice Peter doesn't promise that there won't be darkness. He tells us what God has given us **in the darkness.**

- When culture becomes confusing, God has given us light.
- When your emotions are pulling you in different directions, God has given you light.
- When you're trying to determine what's true, God has given you light.
- When suffering makes it difficult to understand what God is doing, God has given you light.
- When temptation makes darkness look attractive, God has given you light.

That's why Psalm 119:105 says: *"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."*

A lamp doesn't necessarily show you the entire road. It gives you enough light to take the next faithful step. Some of us want God to illuminate the next ten years while He's saying, *"Trust what I've shown you for today."*

But there's something even deeper in Peter's imagery. He says we pay attention to this light **"until the day dawns and the morning star rises."**

Peter is looking forward to the return of Jesus. We're living between the darkness of this present age and the coming day when Christ will make all things new. **We need Scripture because morning is coming.**

Until Christ returns, God has not left His people stumbling around in the dark. He has spoken.

And Peter says: **Pay attention to the light.** That's where this gets personal. With all the voices speaking into your life right now, **which voice are you paying the most attention to?** Because whatever receives your attention eventually begins shaping your direction.

And if we're going to build lives that remain standing when everything around us shifts, we need more than a powerful experience.

We need a trustworthy Word. And Peter is about to tell us exactly why this Word can be trusted.

Point Three - The Word Comes From God

2 Peter 1:20–21 Peter has told us that the apostles were eyewitnesses. He has told us that the prophetic Word is completely reliable and that we should pay attention to it like a light shining in a dark place.

Now he takes us all the way to the foundation. **Why can we trust the Word?**

Look at verses 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 wants the church to understand where Scripture comes from. It didn't originate in human imagination. It wasn't produced because someone sat down one day and decided, *“I think I’ll write something religious.”*

Peter says prophecy **“never had its origin in the human will.”**

Scripture has human writers, but its ultimate source is God. And I love the way Peter describes this.

He says the prophets: *“...spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

That phrase **“carried along”** comes from the Greek word *pherō*. It carries the idea of being borne or moved along. And Peter actually uses the same word later in Acts 27 to describe a ship being driven along by the wind.

Think about that picture. The sailors are really on the ship. The ship is really moving. But there is a force carrying it along.

That's a helpful picture of biblical inspiration. God didn't erase the personalities of the biblical writers.

- Moses sounds like Moses.
- David sounds like David.
- Luke sounds like Luke.
- Paul sounds like Paul.
- Peter sounds like Peter.

Real people wrote in real historical circumstances using their own vocabulary, experiences, and personalities. And yet Peter says that through it all, the Holy Spirit was carrying them along so that what they spoke was **from God**.

I've heard this explained in a lot of different ways.

- *Human voices spoke, but God was behind the message.*
- *The writers were human; the source was divine.*
- *Scripture came through human hands, but it originated in the heart of God.*
- *Men held the pen, but God gave the message.*

All of those are trying to capture the same truth Peter is describing. But I think the clearest way I can say it is this: **Human authors gave Scripture their voice; God gave Scripture its truth.**

That's why Peter can say they were **"carried along by the Holy Spirit."** God didn't erase their voices; He worked through them to communicate His truth.

We first come asking: **“What has God said?”** Because if Scripture ultimately comes from God, then I don't stand over the Word deciding which parts I accept.

I stand **under** the Word and allow God to speak. There will be moments when Scripture encourages me. There will be moments when Scripture comforts me. There will also be moments when Scripture confronts me, corrects me, and tells me something I don't want to hear.

But if I only trust God's Word when it agrees with me, then God's Word isn't actually my authority. **I am.** And Peter is calling us to something better. Not blind faith. Confident trust in the God who has spoken.

Gospel Connection

There's something even more beautiful happening in this passage. Peter isn't defending Scripture simply so we'll win an argument about the Bible. Look again at what he has been talking about from the beginning. **Jesus.** Peter says, *“We were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”*

He remembers hearing the Father declare: *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”* And then he says the prophetic Word is a light shining in darkness until the day dawns and **the morning star rises.**

Everything keeps pointing toward Christ. Because the purpose of Scripture isn't simply to give us information. **Scripture reveals a Person.**

Jesus told the religious leaders in John 5:39: *“These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”*

And John opens his Gospel by telling us: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Then: *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."*

Church, we don't worship a book. We worship **Jesus Christ, the living Word whom the Scriptures faithfully reveal.**

The Jesus Peter saw in glory on that mountain is the same Jesus who came down from the mountain and set His face toward the cross.

The One declared to be God's beloved Son became the suffering Savior.

He carried our sin. He died our death. He rose from the grave. And Peter says there is a day coming when the darkness will finally give way to morning and Christ will return in glory. Until then, God has given us His Word to keep pointing us toward His Son.

So when you open Scripture, you're not simply trying to complete a reading plan. You're learning to recognize the voice of the God who has revealed Himself supremely in Jesus Christ.

Bottom Line

Church, Peter is preparing to die. Soon his voice will be gone. The other apostles will eventually be gone. Generations will come and go. Kingdoms will rise and fall. Cultures will change. Opinions will shift. But Peter knows the church will not be left without a foundation.

God has spoken. So let's come back to where we began: **When everything else shifts, God's Word stands.**

And if that's true, then here's the bottom line: **Don't build your life on what changes. Build your life on what God has spoken.** Because the strength of your life will ultimately be determined by the strength of your foundation.

Challenge

So now the question becomes personal. **What are you building your life on?**

Because every one of us is being formed by something. Every day, voices are competing for our attention and our trust. Culture has a voice. Social media has a voice. Our emotions have a voice. Our friends have a voice. Our past has a voice. The question isn't whether you're listening. The question is: **Which voice has the greatest authority in your life?** Peter says, *"You will do well to pay attention"* to the Word of God.

That means we don't merely admire Scripture. We don't simply agree that the Bible is important. We give it our attention. We allow it to shape our thinking, confront our assumptions, direct our decisions, and form the way we live. Because we cannot build our lives on God's truth if God's truth rarely enters our lives.

So what would it look like to prioritize Scripture again?

Before allowing your phone to fill your mind every morning, open the Word. Before allowing culture to tell you what is true, ask what God has spoken. Before making decisions based only on what feels right, allow Scripture to shape what you believe is right. And when the Word confronts something in you, don't adjust the Word to fit your life.

Allow God to adjust your life to fit His Word.

Invitation / Altar Response

Jesus gives us a picture of this at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. As I referenced earlier In Matthew 7, He describes two people building two houses. From the outside, those houses may have looked very similar.

Then the storm came. Rain fell. Water rose. Winds blew. Both houses experienced the storm. The difference wasn't the storm. **The difference was the foundation.**

Jesus says the wise person is the one who hears His words **and puts them into practice**. Church, storms eventually reveal foundations. And some of us tonight need to ask the Holy Spirit to show us what we've actually been building on.

Maybe you've been building your identity on people's approval. Maybe you've been building your security on money. Maybe you've been building your future on a relationship. Maybe you've allowed your emotions to become your authority. Maybe you love Jesus, but somewhere along the way His Word has moved from the foundation of your life to the margins of it.

This isn't about feeling guilty because you missed your Bible reading. This is bigger than a reading plan. This is about **foundation**. Maybe the Holy Spirit isn't asking you to build a different-looking house tonight.

He's asking you to check what's underneath it.

So if you recognize that you've been building on something that cannot carry the weight of your life, I want to invite you to come. And maybe for some of you, the first foundation that needs to be laid is faith in Jesus Christ Himself. The Bible doesn't ultimately call us to a religious system; it points us to the Savior who died for our sins and rose again so that we could have new life in Him.

For others, tonight is a recommitment. *God, Your Word will have the final say in my life.*

When I understand it and when I don't. When it comforts me and when it corrects me. When culture agrees with it and when culture rejects it. **I will build my life on what You have spoken.** If that's your prayer, I want to invite you to step out and come. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to rebuild our foundations around the truth of God's Word.

Weekly Commission

Church, we're going to walk out of here into a world filled with competing voices.

So this week, **don't just carry your Bible. Let your Bible carry you.**

Open it. Read it. Believe it. Obey it. And when everything around you begins to shift, remember what Peter taught us tonight:

When everything else shifts, God's Word stands.

So don't build your life on what changes. **Build your life on what God has spoken.**

BLESSING

May the **Father who has spoken** anchor you in His truth.

May **Jesus Christ, the living Word**, remain the foundation upon which you build your life.

And may the **Holy Spirit, who carried along the writers of Scripture**, illuminate the Word and form Christ within you.

Go in truth. Go in grace. Go in peace. **Amen.**