



“Do You Know Him” (II Peter 1:16-21)

Sebastian Dortch – NT3574

Today, I want to make 1 simple, life-changing point.

Everything we’ll ever need can be found in Christ. We don’t have to be the hero. We don’t have to get our lives together. As one pastor put it, “Jesus + Anything = Nothing.”

Truth be told, God doesn’t believe we can pull our lives together. He believed we needed to be rescued from the mess we made, not just at the moment we asked to receive Christ, but every day after that, even into eternity.

Let me re-emphasize this point, because it represents a fundamental mistake that I made for so many years as a Christian.

It is common for us to underestimate our need for a Savior **after** we are converted to Christianity.

We get the front-end of our faith: I am broken..... I need a Savior.

And we get excited about the back-end of our faith: One day, we’ll see Jesus face-to-face, in a place where there will be no more tears, no more death, no more sickness, no more pain.

But the **Grand Middle**, the part of faith that calls for us to live on this earth every day, we act as if we’ve been left on our own to work things out. We don’t actually think those words, but that mentality reveals itself in our behavior.

- We live without **prayer**, failing to realize that it’s a chance to depend on the power of someone much greater than you.
- We live without **thanks**, because we believe we’re entitled to an easy life and things going our way.

- We live without offering **forgiveness**, because we convince ourselves that the so-called sin committed against us is so much deeper and grander than the very sins we commit against God every day.
- We live in **fear**, feeling at any moment the real you will be discovered. Well, God wants to know why you're pretending to be someone you're not in the first place.
- We live without **joy**, because we are not able to marvel over the fact that today you didn't wake up in hell, because you and I deserve to be there.
- We live **thinking Scripture** are words, sentences, paragraphs to be taken in daily like vitamins. Instead of viewing them as headphones through which God woos our heart as He demonstrates from the Old Testament to the New how much he loves us.

We need to understand this important point: All of Scripture points to Christ as the answer to all of life's problems. And we'll see in today's lesson that Peter was convinced of this as well. You'll see him point a group of believers to the glory and wonder of Jesus Christ, believers who experience many of the things you and I experience today.

While our focus will be verses 16-21 of the **first** chapter of 2nd Peter, I will read verses 1 to 21 to give us context. I am reading from the English Standard version:

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Confirm Your Calling and Election

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you

practice these qualities you will never fall. **11** For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. **13** I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, **14** since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, *yas* our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. **15** And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

Christ's Glory and the Prophetic Word

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," **18** we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. **19** And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **20** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

A Bit of Background

- Written about 30 years after Christ's death and resurrection.
- He doesn't say in his letter who he's writing to. But, and there's no way to know for sure, if this is a follow-up to 1st Peter, then he's writing to believers who lived in the region of southwestern Asia.
- Peter knows that his death is quickly approaching.
- Which makes this letter all the more urgent for him. He's deeply concerned because these believers were being assaulted with false teaching -- much like what we hear and see today:

These fake, so-called "teachers" and "prophets"

1. Rejected Jesus Christ and his gospel (2:1).
2. Despised authority (2:10).

3. Lived immorally (2:13–14).
4. Mocked the idea that Christ would one day return (3:4).
5. Rejected the idea that God will one day judge every person who lived and lives independently of Him instead of clinging to His free offer of unconditional, unmerited, sin-erasing love. (3:5–7).

So what does this great apostle offer these Christians who are under siege?

Not advice, interestingly enough.

No, he offers them news -- facts and information about a historical person who entered time. A person lived who lived to age 33. A man who was 100% like me -- with flesh and blood and lungs that took in air.

This man, **Ate**. And **slept**. **Laughed**. And **cried**. And even got **mad**, just like you and me.

Yet this man -- this precious, beautiful man -- was a 100% **unlike** you and me. He never sinned. He faced the same temptations you and I face. Yet he never bent, never buckled, never gave in. He was so satisfied with His Father's love for him, so rooted in it, that he walked in absolute sinless perfection.

The devil went as far as to personally tempt him, saying, "Jesus, I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world if you just fall down and worship me." Jesus replied. "There's only one I worship, and His name is God."

And this profound understanding and enjoyment of God's love could not be contained. Jesus wanted others to experience it as well. So he agreed to serve as a substitute. He agreed to have all the sins of God's children -- past, present and future -- placed upon him. And he agreed to have God's white-hot anger over that sin and rebellion placed upon him as well.

So there he was, pinned to a cross, in the middle of the dark... Suffering, taking the place of the likes of you and me. He allowed himself to be separated from God -- God literally turned his back on his beloved one -- so he could guarantee that God would never, ever turn His back on us. Not now. Not tomorrow. Not ever.

By doing this, Jesus knew God would be marveled at and praised, for what kind of Father would kill his son so that he could make sons and daughters out of the very people who hated him? What kind of love is this?

It's Amazing. It's grace, friends.

So let me quickly point to two of Peter's gospel truths:

(1-2) Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

(3-4) 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may **become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

(5-7) Now that you understand what was DONE, go forth and DO.

Because God has freed us from the clutches of sin through the cross of Jesus Christ, we **should** live in accordance with our new identity. We now have the ability to live like Christ, because Christ lives within us.

Peter wants our lives to be marked by:

- Virtue
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Steadfastness
- Godliness
- Brotherly affection
- Love

(13-14) I think it right, as long as I am in this body, **to stir you up by way of reminder**,¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

(16-18) Fascinating section.

It involves an event that has become known as the Transfiguration. For those who unfamiliar to story, let me give you some background.

Jesus was at the point in his ministry when he was predicting his eventual death. His disciples were confused, because they thought Jesus had come to earth more as a political leader who

would free Israel from the iron-fisted control of Rome. The idea of the Messiah being tortured to death wasn't part of their mindset at this point.

In Matthew 17, Jesus takes his three closest disciples -- Peter, with the brothers James and John, high atop a mountain. In verses 2 & 3, it says, "And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him."

Now here's what I think is fascinating.

Why would Peter mention this particular story in his letter, which he wrote more than 30 years after the death and resurrection of Christ? Why this one?

Consider what he passed over:

- Peter's mother-in-law was stricken with fever; touched hand / asleep on a boat that was being swamped with water in a storm. Jesus awakened, and said "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" / the woman who bled uncontrollably for 12 years / sight to the two blind men / the man who couldn't speak / fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish / time Jesus walked on water / the moment Peter said to Jesus, if that's you on the water, bid me to come to you, and then Peter walked on water himself.

I'm confident there were countless other stories he could have recorded.

Let's listen to his words again in 2 Peter:

16 For we did not follow *cleverly devised myths* when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," **18** we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

Definition of a myth: "A traditional or legendary story, usually concerning some being or hero or event, with or without a determinable basis of fact...."

Uh, oh. A myth doesn't have to be based on facts. It can be a story or legend that's completely made up in our minds and passed along through the generations. And that's precisely what these false prophets were trying to do with Christianity. You'll see when we get to chapter 3 of this book that they say along the lines of, "Where's this Christ that you say will one day to judge the earth? It's been 30+ years, and he still hasn't come."

But note Peter's counter-argument: "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

- We didn't make this up.
- We not only saw Jesus, but we saw him in his glory, much more along the lines of how he looked before he came to earth.
- We got to see that there is an afterlife, because we saw Moses and Elijah talking him.
- We came to see the significance of Moses and Elijah being on that mountain. 1) Moses handed down the 10 Commandments, which demonstrates that I need a Savior because I am unable to obey them in my own strength. 2) Elijah was a prophet, and the messages of the prophets predicted that a Savior would one day come to rescue law-ignoring and law-breaking people like myself.
- We heard the voice of God say, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." In that moment, God was declaring -- all of the Bible points to Jesus and our need to be rescued.

The transfiguration burned into Peter's soul because he, in that moment of time, experienced Jesus' splendor and glory. Glory is a combination of God's beauty, power, honor, perfection, holiness and majesty combining together. It is light that shines forth in darkness. It's is God's godness -- the very makeup of God pouring forth.

God said in Isaiah 42:8 that he would never give his glory to anyone -- anyone. Yet here we see Christ so covered in it that Matthew said his faced shined like the sun and his clothes became white as light. How do you we explain this, then? It's easy. Jesus is God.

The transfiguration is a gift to you and me, because Jesus had us in mind when he pulled back the veil to show us who he is. Here's what I mean.

Because Jesus is God, he created all, sustains all, controls all and knows all. Ponder that last thought. He knows exactly what you are thinking At.... This.... Very.... (snap)... MOMENT.

God exists outside of time, and sees the beginning from the end. So Jesus knew that this experience on the mountain would grip Peter, James and John with terror. Yet he took them to see it. And he also knew they would continue to sin after they got off the mountain.

Jesus allowed these three men to see his glory, knowing full well that:

- James and John, along with their mother, would later ask Jesus for permission to sit at his right and left hand, positions of absolute power, in his coming kingdom. This request undercut everything Jesus taught and stood for. Jesus invited his disciples to lose their

lives, to make themselves last, to become joy-filled servants. Instead, these two were looking for thrones to sit upon. How's that for humility?

-- Peter would deny Christ shortly before he was crucified.

Jesus knew that these three men were ridiculous, self-absorbed, self-protecting, self-promoting people just like you and me. And that's the precise reason he came to die. So, as Peter said in verse 1 of this chapter, you and I could stand before God and not be killed, because we will stand before Him covered in the righteousness of Christ.

Because of what Jesus did, my life and experience becomes one with his life and experience. I am joined to him, and he is joined to me, as John would write in John 14:18-20. The union is so complete that when God looks down upon believers today, he says, "This is my beloved son. And that is my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased." Not because of anything we've done. But because He sees us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

(19-21) Peter then adds more evidence to his gospel argument, by saying that we can believe the bible is reliable.

Because the words that you read -- the Old Testament prophecies that predicted that Jesus would come, and the New Testament prophecies predict that Jesus will come again to make all things right -- were spoken by God through men as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity was indeed at work. God spoke through men by the Holy Spirit, predicting the past and future triumphs of the Son, Jesus Christ.

The transfiguration moment is a gift from God. God longs for us to see and cherish His Son. Because one day he will return to judge the devil, his demons and those who convinced themselves that the gospel was simply a clever myth.

The question today is: Do you see him?

Always practice my messages at home before I speak. I figure if I can get a passing grade from my wife and kids, I can handle anything I might get from you guys. When they heard the message, they wanted to make sure that I explained how Christians can experience peace and joy and a love that's so overwhelming that we want to give it away.

So here's the how: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18:

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

- God's spirit lives within us, so that means freedom is within us. We have been set free from the power of sin.
- If we want to become more like Jesus, all we have to do is behold his face in Scripture, recognizing and walking in the power and promises he makes available to us.

As we see him, as we meditate on him, God will change us so we look more like him. So get your eyes off yourself, your circumstances and other people and look to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.