

2 Peter 1:1-21

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Date: 25 February 2024

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[0:00] that in the midst of a complicated world, people rose up and had the potential of taking advantage of his people, false leaders. Now, this is going to be a theme as we go through the whole letter of 2 Peter, and we'll dial in as we go along about who these false leaders are. But for now, here's what I want you to envision. I want you to see these false leaders that Peter is responding to as enemies. They are enemies of the church, enemy of God's people. They're enemies of Peter.

They're kind of these shadowy figures. They stand kind of on the periphery. You can imagine them as like Harry Potter's dementors. They stand on the periphery of things, and yet they're waiting to pounce on vulnerable and unsuspecting people. And it seems Peter is assuming that the folks in his church know who these false leaders are. They know that people have come in, and they are proclaiming something different. And so Peter doesn't take the time to identify them. He just begins by responding to some of the things that, to the threats that they are. And so I want to spend a couple of minutes today, I want to talk about two of these threats, and I want to talk about the hope that Peter has.

But here's the one takeaway that I want you to see, is that God does not promise to rescue you from the complicated world that we live in. But He does promise to provide you with trust and confidence in the midst of it. He doesn't promise to rescue you from this complicated world, but He does promise to give you trust and confidence in the midst of it. So trust and confidence are the two threats.

There is a threat to your trust, and there's a threat to confidence. So let's look at the threat to trust first. Well, you look at verse 16, and Peter seems to jump right in. We didn't follow cleverly devised myths. See, Peter knew that these shadowy enemies were accusing him of peddling these myths. The enemies were saying something like, well, you know, the stories that Peter tells about Jesus, they can't all be true. You know, this stuff about Jesus seems a little bit too good to be true. They aren't totally real. They thought that what Jesus was doing, or at least they said that what Jesus was doing was telling stories about, or what Peter was doing was telling stories about Jesus that were kind of moral myths. They're tales that it doesn't matter if they're true. They have some sort of spiritual lesson you can get from them. But did you notice the repetition in the second part of the passage?

Peter talks about prophecy three different times. Verse 19, verse 20, verse 21. Did you notice that? See, why is Peter focusing on prophecy and talking about myths? Well, here's the fundamental thing.

[2:59] Jesus had not returned yet. This was the year 65, 66, 67, something like that. You know, Jesus had died and was raised and ascended to heaven in the year 33, 34, 35, something like that. It's been 30 years. You know what the apostles had been saying? The apostles had been saying, Jesus is coming, and now they're dying. Peter himself is dying. Everything in the New Testament is pointing towards a quick return of Jesus, and he's not coming. It had been decades. It was clear that Jesus wasn't coming back like they thought, and so the enemies were saying, look, look, Jesus hasn't come. All of this stuff that the apostles have been saying is a lie. They've been telling these myths. Now, they're good stories. They tell you how to be moral. They tell you how to be good. Jesus was good.

He's just not who you think that he is. They're questioning the trustworthiness of Peter as a witness to Jesus as God, to the big message. See, Peter understood that trust was what was at risk here, and so he wanted to give them a reason to trust him. So what did he give them as a reason?

Well, he went back to the story about the transfiguration. Why? He wanted to show them that he had been with Jesus, that he's not just telling them stories, but that he had been with Jesus, that his presence with Jesus is the thing that authenticates his message. But here's what's kind of interesting. You hear him alluding to that story that Jane read for us about the transfiguration, but he doesn't talk about the details. You know, he's already given that to John Mark. John Mark put it down in his gospel. It's already written in the gospels. They've been reading the gospels by now. He doesn't give the details, and he doesn't give any of the meaning of the transfiguration. He focuses on something else. He's focused on the majesty that was present, that he saw. Look at verse 16. When we made known the power and the coming of Jesus, that to be in the presence of Jesus in that moment meant that he was in the presence and the power of God. We received, or he received honor and glory from the Father. Peter, it's as though Peter is saying, look, I got to see behind the things. I got to see behind the veil that we cannot look through. I had a moment where I looked at God. I had a moment where I saw the majesty and the glory and the infinite beauty and transcendence of Jesus right in that moment. I saw something that humans aren't supposed to see. The voice was born on the majestic glory. Did you notice that in your

Bibles, majestic glory is capitalized? Why? It was talking about the glory cloud, the cloud that accompanied the people of Israel out of Egypt that was a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke during the day that descended on Mount Sinai when God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. The cloud that descended upon the temple and filled the temple with the presence of God. And what Peter is saying is, I touched the cloud. I heard the voice. I saw the brightness of that moment. I heard him say that this is my son whom I love, who I'm well pleased. Listen to him. Peter is saying, I was there.

I saw it. I touched it. I heard it. I saw the glory. And he's looking at these enemies and he's saying, tell me what they saw again. Tell me what their authority is. Why would you trust them? They haven't been with Jesus. Sure, they've got an argument. They're saying things that sound good, but they haven't been with Jesus. You see, here's the problem. In a complicated world, people want to clarify things, don't they? So you have people that stand up and they give all sorts of advice, that they speak confidently. They proclaim a wisdom that sounds wise, but isn't. They promise to settle your anxieties.

[7:45] They promise to give you clear solutions. They promise to make the world less complicated if you just follow them. But that's not what Peter is having. He's not having that. Peter wasn't offering a way to make the world less complicated. What Peter was offering was a way to know Jesus more deeply, to touch the glory of Jesus. A pastor friend of mine used to talk about pastoral leadership, especially when I was, when I was, as I was maturing. He would say, he would say this, you know, there are, and I think he was talking about spiritual leaders, but I think we can apply this beyond that.

He would say there are, there are three levels of leadership that you really need in order to trust someone. The first one is, you have to ask the question, does this person have the integrity to be trustworthy? You know, do they lie? You know, can I trust that this person has in personal integrity, that what they say is actually true? That's the first question. That's, that's like the bare bones of a leader. The second question is, are they, do they have the competency to do, to accomplish the things that they say that they'll accomplish? There are plenty of people who are trustworthy, but they are not competent to do the things that they say they're going to do. But there's another level up above that. And he said that, can I trust that this person will take me where I need to go?

Can this person take me to Jesus? Another way to say this is, has this, is this person, they may have integrity and they may be competent, but have they been with Jesus? Do they have the markers of having been in the presence of Jesus? Because that is the trustworthy kind of person that we need to follow?

You see, the question for us as we read this passage is really simple. It's who do you trust? Who are you following and why? Who is it that you listen to and value their perspective? Who do you give weight to? Who is it that you are following? Where are they going to lead you? Are they going to lead you to the glory of God? Are they going to lead you some, to something different? That doesn't mean that every one of your leaders needs to be all the same, but it does mean you need to ask the question. One of the great pastor and theologians of the last century was a man named Francis Grimke. You probably haven't heard much about Francis Grimke because he was black and because we don't have, we until recently were not writing down or publishing a lot of the work that he had done. He escaped slavery at 12 years old. He went north, eventually got educated at Princeton

Seminary. He ended up pastoring a church in D.C. His congregation was 10th Street Presbyterian Church, still there. He pastored it, get this, from 1878 to 1928, 50 years. 50 years he pastored this congregation and think about what happened in those 50 years. He pastored this church through Jim Crow, through the urban industrial revolution, through World War I, through the Spanish flu epidemic, and right into and through the Great Depression. And yet, well not through the Great Depression, that was 29. That was wrong. Through the roaring 20s is really what I should have said there.

[11:23] I'm a history guy. I've got to get that right. He was a trustworthy leader for this congregation. He led the people to the glory of Jesus. Listen to how this man, with his history, talked about about what racism and what the future of the country could look like because of the gospel. He says this, he says, I am hopeful because I have faith in the power of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ to conquer all prejudices, to break down all walls of separation, and to weld together men of all races into one great brotherhood. Can you imagine a man who had dealt with what he had dealt with, to say that he is hopeful for the unity of the body of Christ without prejudice?

The bringing together of people because of the work that had been done through Jesus, the tearing down of the walls of hostility. See, he was a trustworthy leader in a complicated time.

You know, we live in this moment where there is a crisis of trust, a crisis of truth. You know, you need to be aware of who it is you're following and why.

The podcast you listen to, the news media you consume, the leaders, you need to ask the question, why you follow me? Frankly. I don't just get to stand up here and automatically demand that you follow me. I have to have that kind of integrity and competency. I have to have been with Jesus.

You know, teenagers, you need to ask the question, who you're following? Who are the friends that help, that you tend to mimic their expectations in how you dress and what you listen to and how you talk and the decisions you make? What sort of people on social media, the influencers, do you find most compelling? Why is that? What is it that grabs your attention from these people? Are they trustworthy?

[13:38] Look, I'm going to be honest. Some of us, some of us are like those people, the people that Paul writes about in 2 Timothy, where he says that the time is coming when we will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, we'll accumulate for ourselves teachers to suit our own passions, we'll turn from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. Do you hear the irony there?

Peter was being accused of preaching myths about Jesus being, you know, just this great moral teacher, but what Paul says is you can be pulled away into other kinds of myths, the kinds of myths that seem to gratify our nature. They seem to answer some sort of problems within us. It answers our anxiety. It makes the world less complicated. We have to be careful, friends. Ask that of the pastors you listen to, the pundits you turn on, the leaders you follow, the politicians you vote for. Maybe Lent is the best time for you to take a step back, not just to repent, but to examine, who is it that I follow? Okay, there's a threat to the trust. In a complicated world, there is a threat to trusting. Okay, the second thing is there's a threat to confidence. How do we build confidence?

What's the threat to that? So Peter wanted to warn the people to trust him, but the world was still confusing. It was still complicated. How could he offer any greater level of confidence in the world, in a confusing world, than these shadowy enemies? Well, what did he offer? Well, you saw it in the second part of our passage, right? He offered the scriptures, verse 19. We have something more sure.

Wait, wait, wait, wait. Hold on. Peter just told you that he saw God. He touched the glory. He heard the voice that none of, no human has heard. He saw Jesus. He saw behind the curtain of immortality, and he says he has something more certain than that, which is God's word. You kidding me? That's ridiculous. Because what I want is I want that kind of experience. If I can be, if I can have an experience of God, then I will really know that it's true. But Peter says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

You've got too many things that you can misinterpret in your own soul for that. He says, what you need is something sure and certain that you can have confidence in, and I'm giving it to you right here.

[16:42] I'm giving you God's word. Verse 19, we have something more sure, the prophetic word. Verse 20, no prophecy from scripture comes from one's own interpretation. 21, no prophecy was produced by the will of man. The enemies, you can imagine, were saying things like, look, Jesus hasn't come yet.

All this prophecy stuff, all of that's just, you know, those are nice stories, but this was all a lie. All the stuff that you're scared of, the stuff in the real world, not these prophecies in the Bible, but the stuff in the real world, it's that is what is true. You really are in danger. You need a new plan. Jesus, these Jesus prophecies, they're not going to save you. You can imagine them saying, look, these guys said he was the Messiah, but he hadn't come back, and frankly, he doesn't look like the kind of Messiah we need right now with our problems. Have you seen our problems lately? You know, this Messiah of Jesus, he's not going to overthrow the Romans. The Romans, they're bad guys. You should be scared of them. Turn the other cheek. Are you kidding me? That doesn't help you when you've got a Roman centurion bearing down on you. It's naive to wait on Jesus. Peter says he's a Messiah, but he doesn't look anything like what we need. You can't trust it. The threats are too real. You've got to get confidence somewhere. Doesn't that feel familiar? Doesn't that feel like the kinds of messages that we hear in our own day, the response to confusing times, the complicated world we live in, don't you hear messages just like that? You need to protect your money because we don't know what's going to happen.

You need to protect your children from those people. You need to protect your freedoms. You need to protect your way of life. The Bible, yes, the Bible's fine for going to church on Sunday. It teaches you how to be a nice person. It teaches you how to raise your kids, give them morals. But when the threats are serious, you need to provide your own security. Security provided by Smith & Wesson.

The threats are too real. Christians have to win. Doesn't that sound a little bit like Psalm chapter 2? Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain against the Lord and His anointed?

See, the people in the response to the complicated world, you know, the people got moving. The people are finding solutions. People are becoming strong. They're gaining certainty and security for themselves.

[19:35] Here's why Peter says this, though. What Peter is offering is, he's saying, look, you can attempt to combat this confusing and complicated world that we live in with providing your own security, finding your own confidence. But I want to give you something that is more sure and more certain. Why is it more sure and more certain? Because it does not come from man, but it comes from God. That's the fundamental difference. See, Peter is saying that Scripture is like a light in the darkness. It's like dawn coming over the horizon on a cold morning to cast away the darkness and the cold of night. God's Word provides clarity and confidence in a confusing world. God's Word can be trusted above everything else. Now, here's what's really interesting about it.

Peter is not just talking about the Old Testament. Now, they had the Old Testament, right? For hundreds of years, the people to whom he's writing had access to the Old Testament, to the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They had Genesis and the Pentateuch. They had the Psalms and they prayed them.

Peter's talking about that, but he's also talking about more. You see, verse 21, Peter was making a defense for what we call the New Testament Scriptures, the stuff that we're reading about right here. Peter knew that the things that he and Paul and Luke and John were all writing were on equal standing to those Old Testament Scriptures. I want to read to you just from chapter 3.

We'll get to this in a couple of weeks. Chapter 3, verse 15. Here's what Peter says. Here's what he says about the Apostle Paul. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you in accordance with the wisdom given him. Wait, these people who are reading this letter had also read the letters of Paul. Maybe Galatians, maybe Colossians. I don't know.

Verse 16. As he does in all his letters when he speaks about these matters, there are some things in them that are hard to understand. Have you ever read any of Paul's letters? There are some things in them that are hard to understand. Peter thinks Paul is hard to understand.

[22:14] He says this, Which you, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. He calls Paul's words Scripture. In fact, Paul does the same thing.

He wrote this in 1 Thessalonians, that when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the Word of men, but what it really is, the Word of God.

Here's the most fascinating thing about the New Testament, in my opinion, is that the guys who were writing the New Testament knew that they were writing Scripture that was just as trustworthy as what Moses wrote 2,500 years before that.

That was just as trustworthy as the poems that David wrote. That was just as trustworthy as Isaiah. They understood that.

That prophecy, that Scripture does not come from them, but it is something that comes from God. It is God-directed. This is our, you know, we don't talk about our doctrines of things very much at Grace and Peace in the sermons.

[23:23] We do that in our Gospel Doctrine class and Gospel Culture class. But this is the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture right here. That God was directing those who wrote these messages, the message that He desired, and those people expressed and articulated God's message inside their own personalities and cultural realities and histories.

Here, Francis Grimke talked about this. Listen to what Francis Grimke said. When we speak of the Bible as the Word of God, we mean that the men who wrote it were supernaturally guided in what they wrote.

They were used as agents of the Holy Spirit to communicate truth, to record facts for the guidance of humanity. What they wrote, therefore, is to be received as true on the authority of the Holy Spirit.

These words that we have here, especially if you are new to the church or you might have questions or you might have seen things on TikTok that talk about where the Bible came from, I want to be really clear for you.

These words came from God. And these words were not just things that have been casually passed down that might have been corrected here and there and there's a lot of doubt over them.

[24 : 40] No, no, no, no, no. This is the most well-attested document in the history of the world. The amount of copies that we have over the entire Mediterranean world from North Africa through Palestine into North America or into North America into Europe is astounding.

Like tens of thousands of varying copies that all agree on what we have written here. This is the most trustworthy document that has ever been written because it wasn't fundamentally from man but from God.

Peter is saying that the scriptures can give you confidence even in complicated times, even if Jesus has not returned yet, even if Jesus isn't the Messiah you want Him to be, even if the dangers are real, even if it seems like the promises haven't come true yet, the scriptures are pointing us to an even greater confidence than the complicated world we live in.

You see, the cross and the empty tomb are God's message to the complicated world that we live in. They declare that in the midst of threats and in the midst of dangers and in the midst of confusions and let me be clear, the threats and the dangers and the confusions are very real.

I do not want to minimize it. They are very real. But we have a confidence that transcends those threats because of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus and that are revealed in the scriptures.

[26 : 30] There's two things. Here's where we'll stop today. Here's why the cross and the resurrection give you confidence. Number one is that we see that God has already done something to address every threat that you feel in a complicated world.

There is no threat that befalls us right now in this world that God has not already foreseen and has done something about through His cross in grave.

Jesus Himself on the cross took every sin, took every evil, every injustice, every wickedness of His people upon Himself and He died for it.

We can say it this way. Jesus has lived your worst nightmare. He's lived it. Whatever your great fear is, Jesus has walked that path already and He was victorious over it and He did it so that you do not have to live by the fear of your worst nightmare.

Jesus has taken it on Himself. We do not have to fear. We can trust and have confidence in what Jesus has done.

[27 : 47] That's the first thing. The second thing is that because of this, the greatest threats in our world will one day be undone. The greatest injustices we see will one day be made right.

The greatest failures, the greatest tragedies will one day be overcome in blessing. That you don't get to know when and you don't get to know how and you don't get to know, we don't get to be like Peter and see behind the veil of immortality.

