

In Peter's Shadow

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[0 : 01] But today, I was reviewing this little talk last evening, and I know we've got a rather dramatic title, Peter's Shadow, you saw the title, but to sort of calm the title down a bit, maybe the subtitle should be something like, Notions Attempting to be Thoughts, or something like that, because there's a kind of, I'm trying to understand something myself as I work through this stuff, so take it as a tenet of work in progress, what that's being. It may not be above anything that's all that important, but we'll see, we'll see.

It's just a way of introduction here. We're looking at today a couple of passages from the Holy Scripture, one of the things we do at church. Christians gather, we read the book of Acts these days, and they attend to the Apostles' teaching, intended to Scripture forming in those days. We'll look today just briefly at a passage from Acts, the bottom here, it's 5, 12, 16, 2 Peter 1 to 11, 2 Peter chapter 1, 1 to 11 at the top, a passage from Acts, a passage from 2 Peter. Or a passage about Peter, from Acts, and a passage by Peter.

Peter, or for those, I know Learners Exchange attracts this type of person, for those of you who are from the hypercritical tradition, we'll call it a passage as well from the Petrine tradition. I hope that impressed you. Peter as a prominent, a prominent presence, just again by way of introduction, a very prominent presence in the New Testament, is our blessed Peter.

Of course, he is in all four Gospels, isn't he? Of course. He's in Acts. He's also in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, a great witness to the resurrection listed by Paul. In Galatians, he appears as in some kind of conflict with Paul. He wrote, the Church understands him to have written two epistles. And I suppose we could say that he appears in the Apocalypse as well, as in the 24 elders picture. One of those would be Peter. Dispute about Peter goes a long way into finding the difference between Rome and Geneva. Rome and the world of Orthodoxy also disingenuous precisely in what role Peter plays in the Church. Protestants could ask him some interesting questions. Does Peter play any role in the Church? Specifically as Peter. He was, in some sense, the spokesman for the inner circle around Jesus. He was on the Holy Mount. He calls it in 2 Peter, in 2 Peter, on the occasion of the Transfiguration. He, on another occasion, we are told in Scripture, he, think about it, he walked on water. He confessed the Lord's status as Messiah. And he revealed himself as not knowing the strangeness of the Messiah's work, earning the Lord's stunning rebuke, get behind me Satan. What a chap is Peter in Scripture. All deserving, of course, prolonged meditation. We can further say about Peter, expanding a bit further, he preached on the first Pentecost. A mighty sermon reviewing Hebrew Scripture as the setting in which the resurrection was to be proclaimed and understood. He was a theologian, Peter, in a sense. He was.

He was one of the first, again, to concretely know the fact of the resurrection. That's why he's listed in 1 Corinthians 15. He raced to the tomb, we know, with John, didn't he? If he was the first Pope, or the first Bishop of Rome, which is probably a dubious historical claim, whether or not he even went to Rome is in dispute. If he was that, this first Bishop was married, as Jesus, we're told, in Mark's Gospel. And elsewhere, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. A reference is made, in fact, to Peter's marital status in the Corinthian correspondence. Peter is just everywhere. Everything about Peter is interesting, I'm sure. And of course, I think we can say safely more than merely interesting. There's something I find peculiarly almost intriguing about Peter. He plays a very interesting and even strange role in our faith. Looking at Peter,

[5 : 16] Peter, of course, will in time, it involves the mystery of Jesus. Behind, if you will, Peter's shadow is the shadow of his Lord, Jesus. The truth, we are told, will set you free. But it will also, it's been said, I know, and I'm sure you'll agree, it will make you a bit strange, the truth. I think the truth made our Peter, our blessed Peter, our teacher in the faith, it made Peter a bit strange. Therefore, I hope it will be interesting this morning to just take a look at Peter and some of the indications that

issues about Peter in the New Testament are raised, it seems to me. Let me say a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for the first witnesses to your mystery in the world. We thank you for the apostles. And today, specifically, we thank you for the witness of Peter. And as we look at him, Lord, help us to come to know the far greater thing, which is to know you. We pray this, Lord God, in the name of

Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let me just run through these quickly. Many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles, says Acts 5, verse 12. They were all together in Solomon's portico, a place where Jesus had taught, we're told in the Gospels. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes, men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, we're told, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by, specifically Peter, as Peter came by, his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick, those afflicted with unclean spirits, they were all healed.

Peter came by, people wanted his shadow to fall on some of them. So says Acts. There you go. To Peter, Simeon Peter, that's the Hebraic word of Simeon, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours, in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you, writes Peter, in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Grace and peace. Then he says this, his divine power has granted us, 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, these little connector words in this passage are a bit perplexing. By which he has granted to us escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion and become partakers of the divine nature. Then a famous passage where he starts to say, for this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with steadfastness, steadfastness with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love. Then he continues, Peter, for if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unproofful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For it lacks these things as blind and short-sighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, he concludes this little moment in his second epistle, therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election. For if you do this, you will never fall. So there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If you read an apostle, especially Peter, who spent two or three years with our Lord, are there echoes of things that Jesus taught right there? Just the shadow of Peter with the shadow of Jesus behind him. He knows it. There you go. The most influential New Testament critic of the 20th century, probably, was one famous chap named Rudolf Bultmann. He famously, you will know of, demythologizing fame.

If you own a radio, words to this effect, he famously once said, if you own a radio, you can't believe in angels. There you go. What angels represent. So spoke the magisterial Mr. Bultmann. Some regard him as a genius, and I think in some way he probably was. Massively learned he was, no doubt. Others would see him as hopelessly at cross-purposes with the material he spent his life studying. His exegesis at times is quite insightful.

[10:27] I notice he's not here today, so I'll point out that James Packer on occasion quotes the exegesis of Mr. Bultmann. And positively, it's very good stuff. He was a sort of Lutheran, and finally read the New Testament in his day, a very prominent existentialist term. You know, man is guilty, sounds like Luther, but stands nevertheless in the world with courage and existentialist things.

Sort of Martin Hediger, when he felt religious, is how you understand Rudolf Bultmann. I recall Tom Howard doing a bit of name dropping today as I start my talk. You know Tom Howard, a prominent evangelical, became a Roman Catholic.

Many years ago at Regent, I heard this in person, he was asked about Mr. Bultmann. I love this exchange he had about Mr. Bultmann. He simply replied that he, again, Tom Howard, was at the opposite end of things from the great German scholar.

And from memory again, but this is exactly, I know what he said. He said, if something is reported that seems even remotely mysterious, I leap to the conclusion that it is a miracle. That's a lovely thing for Mr. Howard to say.

I think he shows there, I would call it, in a good sense, a Catholic sensibility about the world in which we live. A Catholic, I'll call it an evangelical sensibility.

[12:02] We are in the presence, so we believe as Christians, we are in the presence of an invisible divine order. This, we are to believe. The gospel instructs us to believe that.

Today, as we sit here drinking coffee and talking to one another, we are in the presence of, again, an invisible divine order.

That's where we live. We are not wise to assume that we are familiar with this divine order. That leads to presumption. The Church has realized that, sometimes even to superstition.

The evil one delights, as C.S. Lewis famously wrote, the evil one delights in a magician as much as in a materialist. Mr. Howard's, I take it again, wise reply means to say, as I understand it, that we are to cultivate this truth about the fact that we live in the presence of a divine order.

We are to cultivate that truth about, again, we are in that presence. How well, how well, how shall we do this well?

[13:17] How do we cultivate the fact that we live in a divine order according to the gospel? Maybe it will help by looking in a straightforward way at passages like Acts 5, 12-16, and beginning up to Peter 1, the first 11 verses.

Just to simply, in a straightforward way, look at these passages. It is simple, in a simple way, but not in a way which is theologically unreflective, of course.

It is, I like to start at the start. Don't assume that you know things, but put it on the table when you think you know it. It is to Holy Scripture that we turn when we look at these two passages.

This is Holy Scripture, known in the Church because Holy Scripture forms the Church.

That is to say, it is not the Church which forms the Bible. That is a thing which is contested in Christian history. Protestants classically have believed that it is Rome's error to believe the second, that the Church forms Scripture.

[14:34] That is why the Church's tradition which forms Scripture also has further authority as history moves on. So, the High Magisterial Reformation, as it is called, and Rome disagreed fiercely about this little detail.

It may be the most important difference between the two communities. Holy Scripture is known in the Church because Holy Scripture forms the Church.

The Church does not form Holy Scripture. We read, that is, in the wonderful words of John Webster, we read in the economy of grace.

Economy means in theology, God's way. This economy is further as God's Word comes to us as we read it today, as we just did.

It comes to us as Word and Spirit. Word and the Spirit decisively forming faith in us. Decisively forming our interpretation.

[15:42] And then forming, it seems to me, I want to talk about this today more, our sensibilities as Christians. And how we understand ourselves as living in the presence of that divine order.

I want to just emphasize this again. Not some other merely religious paradigm. You know, there are other ways that you can just slip into reading without even thinking about it.

And in principle, you just leave the Gospel behind when you do it. Someone might say, no, no, no, I don't like that way of reading. I am humble. You often hear this in some religious circles.

I am humble. I see God as unknowable. And nothing but unknowable mystery is God. And therefore, we are just doing our interpretation when we look at the Bible.

I am religious that way. I think I can safely say at the cathedral downtown, that's the way they read Scripture. I think I can safely say that.

[16:42] Formally put in theological terms, you know, that would be called anthropology, swallowing up revelation. There you go. We don't want our imaginations to make sense of the Bible.

It seems to me. We desire, specifically as Christians, the holy gift of holy Scripture to heal, to order, to inform our imaginations.

Anything else will be in time, idolatry and unbelief. So there is sort of an introduction to dogmatic, gospel truth about reading.

Of course, you have to say immediately that that doesn't solve exegetical problems. You know, how you unpack Scripture, see what it says, it means. Patient, humble inquiry must continue to happen.

And it does in the church. Without that we become, if you will, if this is the right way to put it, but you can become a mere pietist. Often a quorum by yourself of the Bible, getting nice feelings from it.

[17:49] But it puts us on the right track. It puts us on the right ground for theological reading, to do that little bit of theological work before we read. But we believe, sense is not constructed.

Sense is not made of this text, the Bible. The word, which we read, and we believe in the church that the gift of the Holy Spirit, confers its intended sense, its intended meaning, on us.

That is what the Gospel instructs us to understand by reading. Peter talks in this epistle about the sense of Scripture is never a private interpretation.

It's given to the church through word and spirit. And it has God's intended meaning in it. And that we are to struggle to get God's intended meaning. Not what we make up about Scripture.

The final difficulty in reading Scripture, therefore, is not exegetical. It is our defiance of grace, really. If you're a bad reader of Scripture, it's because you're defying God's grace, which God is speaking to you about in Scripture.

[19 : 05] All unbelief is in fact a form of defiance. I need these kind of preliminaries. I need these kind of preliminaries.

I need these kind of preliminaries. They help me. Here's where I'm dealing with notions and I hope they become thought. I need these kind of preliminaries.

They give me some orientation, if you will. When I come across, and this is happening again and again and again with us as a community, since we're all paying attention one way or another to the book of Acts.

When I come across something like, we heard about it a moment ago, when we come across something like Peter's shadow. You know, I would as a believer, and I do, but I would delight in this shadow.

I like the mystery here in the popular sense, small-end mystery. Peter's shadow is in the world. People placed it. Sick people.

[20 : 16] And it had a healing presence. Peter's shadow. This is religion in the world sense, often, isn't it? Church is about spooky things.

A lot of people go to church for it. There's some spookiness out there. Peter's shadow. There it is. Again, I would delight in it. It is healing, apparently, Peter's shadow, and it reveals heaven at work. Again, I want to believe this as the gospel instructs me to believe. I believe not because some magisterial authority instructs me to believe.

There is a church in the world, and it's a prestigious and massive institution, that would tell me, finally, that's why I should believe. There's a magisterium that says, believe.

That's why you should believe. Or because perhaps a scholar prince of some kind that I'm in touch with commends me to believe this.

[21 : 20] Maybe I should believe on that basis. Or because I'm a pious reader, and I just like that kind of thing. I'm inclined to like that kind of thing.

This is the pious evangelical tradition gone bad, you might call it. I just like religion. I like magic shadows. Here is, Calvin calls it, here is heavenly doctrine.

Calvin always got his theology right, at least we believe that in our kind of Anglican circle. Here is, which is a small circle at Middle East, but there it is. Here is heavenly doctrine.

Again, Calvin uses that phrase. Sent to say as word and spirit, and forming, creating in us the act of faith.

That's what happens when we read about Peter's shadow, for instance. I believe that in the church. I believe that in the church. I believe that in the church. I believe that in the church.

[22 : 21] I believe that in the church. That's the gospel's way of reading and of hearing scripture in the church. After all, and of course, as I've implied this already, one might be embarrassed by Peter's shadow.

As a modern believer. As a modern believer. Let's take note of the culture in which we live. It's part of it. It's a strong, big part of our culture, if you will.

The early church, quote, the early church confers status and power upon itself and or its leadership, here by pious invention. Unquote.

That's my sentence. I'm quoting myself. But it would be a common response. It would be a very common response in many reflective church circles for the last 150 or 200 years.

There wasn't a magic shadow in coming Peter that healed people. Come off it. Get over that. You believe that? Well, I do. I want to believe it in the gospel.

[23 : 24] But for a long time now, it would be the common sense deconstruction of such things.

The fancy language that we've thrown around. That this is the church imagining itself in power with

prestige.

This draws people to it. You know. These kind of stories. You might be embarrassed by Peter's shadow. I'm not. He said, well, but you might be in our culture.

But in the conservative Catholic world, we again note, in the world of capital O, capital O, orthodoxy, and in the conservative Protestant world that we belong to broadly, we go on insisting that if we're asked.

If we're asked. I don't know how often you're asked anymore about these things. Peter, as reported here, so say these traditions, did so walk in the first century.

He did cast a shadow. And this shadow, which shadow, healed some sick people. And I believe that. Perhaps this was a kind of submitted gesture of honor that may stand behind this text.

[24 : 37] We might, maybe, I have no authority for saying that. I'm guessing. Who knows? People did know Jesus, we're told in the gospels. They did honor him rather, by touching the hem of his garment.

And they were healed in that touching. I love those moments in the gospels. But I admit, to the modern sensibility, they seem, again, magical, and strange, and very alien.

But we are told in the gospels again that Jesus would go to a village and stand there and people would come to touch him and they'd be healed. What a beautiful picture of what our world needs. We also think it really happened. Our Lord was really there. And his very presence radiated power. As did Peter's shadow.

There it is. Mere proximity. Not necessarily, but mere proximity may confer benefit.

[25 : 38] Seems to be in front of us in this part of scripture. But I can ask myself again, is that a pathway to superstition? Or is there something to learn here?

That's where I get to my little question. I admit it's a little question, but it does hang around the back of my mind, especially when I relax. The other day, forgive an anecdote here, I hope it's interesting. I heard an interview with a, I think he was a Roman Catholic cardinal. He may have been a mere archbishop, I don't know. But he was from Chicago.

An elderly gentleman. Very impressive fellow. And he was asked about many current issues.

Abortion, religion in the schools, healthcare, American debate about that.

Very interesting on current Anglican Roman Catholic stuff. You know, their big offer to us all to join. He had recently written a book. That was the cause of the, of course, the cause of the interview.

[26 : 40] The interviewer asked, this is the point of this anecdote. The interviewer asked him, what's important in doing the kind of culture criticism that you do in this book? That he'd recently written.

And his answer surprised me. That's why he would have this anecdote. And I'm still thinking about it, but I think the cardinal slash archbishop is onto something here. He responded, again, I just had a pair of authority about him.

He was a very thoughtful man. He said, you critique a culture, he said this was very important, you critique a culture only when you first love it. He said, you must love the culture that you critique.

I'm thinking about that, but I think I know what he meant. He, he, there may be an implication in our Lord's words about loving your enemies. That means whenever you critique something, make sure you love it first, and then you'll critique it intelligently with insight.

Love brings insight. Don't just be a critiquer of something. Make sure you love what you're critiquing. I think there's truth in that. So all, as a, as a lover of my own culture, all respect and admire say as someone from the world of the Enlightenment, like a David Hume.

[27 : 59] You know him. From the world of the Scottish Enlightenment. And I'll listen to him as he asks me, well, if you believe this Peter's shadow story, this is what a rationalist in our culture would ask me.

I confess that I've been, I've imbibed a lot of what they say into myself, so I can pose these questions to myself.

If you believe in the Peter's shadow story in your book, why do you not believe the same kind of story when it's repeated in other religious traditions? David Hume would ask that.

David Hume would ask that. He does ask questions like that. And I will grant that, that he's, he's onto something there. I feel challenged by that question as a Christian living in our time.

There is a kind of, Hume is implying by this kind of question, a kind of reduction to absurdity in believing. If you believe in the shadow that heals once, why don't you believe in it always when it's

reported in other religions?

[29 : 08] How come? How come? Says Mr. Hume to me. And I, again, I repeat myself, I've internalized my culture, which I love in some ways. And I ask myself this question.

When we read the book of Acts about magicians doing healing and people sending cloths off that had power in them to heal and Peter's shadow. One chap in the book of Acts is translated somewhere.

Was that Philip? Philip? He was, he was there and then he was someplace else. He confronts us with these things, which again I delight in with Mr. Howard, I delight in them.

Belief, as our duty to the truth, is required here. But for what reason? Now here I'm getting, again to my, these are notions, I hope that they have some value.

Shadows of people and hems of garments of rabbis don't heal as rule. I admit. That we will grant. But Mr. Hume, who represents our culture in a lot of ways, he thinks that we're on the defensive here.

[30 : 14] And I grant that for a moment I feel on the defensive these kind of questions. What kind of belief do we practice in believing in Peter's shadow? Which again I want to say, I do.

I believe in Peter's shadow. What kind of belief is this that I'm practicing? I believe this is a form of, here's my answer to myself and to Mr. Hume.

I believe that this is a form of believing again, if you will. Belief is not just something you do once. You believe again. You have to believe again and again and again.

Believing, that is to say, I need to believe in Peter's shadow in the economy of grace. Not, I must not believe this as a mere pietist.

I like this kind of story. Not because again, it's structured by the magisterium. Or by a scholar prince. My favorite religious writer tells me to believe it. No.

[31 : 15] See, Mr. Hume again, to go back and to see what he's getting at as I understand it. In the discussion time you can tell me if I got this right or wrong or if it's even important.

Many people in our culture, Mr. Hume speaks for them in a very sophisticated way. They assume that if you believe in something like this, that it shows that belief is a reckless thing.

You know? And often we have to admit as religious people that that is correct. But I think, again, coming right to the point and moving right along, that the gospel itself will correct any kind of reckless, silly, superstitious believing.

The gospel, again, instructs us to go on believing again and again. We have to grow and mature in our believing.

And that's a good thing. And that's a good thing. Which is highlighted for us in 2 Peter, chapter one, the first eleven verses, I think. I've come to appreciate this passage in the last little while very much.

[32 : 25] I've read it, knowing I was going to talk a bit about it, just read it the last two or three weeks every morning. I add that on to my regular reading. I love the way it begins, for instance.

Peter, again, I've tried to juxtapose these two passages in my thoughts for the last little while. Peter, the man with the mighty shadow, says that he addresses people who have obtained a light faith as his own.

Isn't that lovely? Did you notice that little bit up there at the top? Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those he writes to. And the church receives this as Peter is addressing us as an apostle, as a teacher of the church appointed by Jesus.

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours. That is lovely. Again, the man who healed with his shadow.

He addresses you and I today, you and me, as people who have obtained a faith just like his own. There is authority, isn't there, an office in the New Testament.

[33 : 41] But it does not envision a tiered church, a leveled church, as I understand it. A division, for instance, into the laity and the religious is at the very least suspicious, at least to the Protestant mind.

Peter, or the Petrine church, we may say that again, may be, I don't know, may be echoing something here from John's Gospel. Blessed are those from Jesus, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

That comforts me. I never saw an apostle, I never saw a shadow heal anybody. But I may have noticed that Jesus anticipates my problem.

Blessed are you, you haven't seen any of this kind of stuff, and yet you believe. Our Lord commends believing without seeing.

Seeing is believing. I think that's what David Hume, in our rationalist culture, really believes. Seeing is believing. Well, maybe, but we believe as Christians that believing is seeing.

[34 : 51] Don't we? We even have one of my favorite little moments in the New Testament, from the letter to the Hebrews, which talks about seeing Him who is invisible.

I love that. That defines the life of faith, doesn't it? Seeing Him who is invisible. Peter is an apostle. He has a received authority.

And this authority is known as a servant authority, isn't it? As he says right here. Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.

He is a servant of the gospel. Servant authority. A lovely idea. The man with the mighty shadow is a servant of Jesus. The Prime Minister of Canada is prime because he's first and he's a minister.

He's a servant. That's what we can expect from our political leaders that we so often receive. It's a political announcement or something.

[36 : 00] He points, doesn't he, to... He points to... He speaks of here in this passage of the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours. Again, that remarkable gift to us of those words. You have a faith, Peter says, the man with the shadow that could heal people.

You have a faith just like mine. You stand with Jesus and the King of Heaven just as I do. You have a faith just like ours. The plural may mean we, the apostolic man.

And you have obtained a faith in the righteousness. This is a strange phrase, isn't it? In the righteousness of our... It's at verse one there still. In the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Again, Peter points at that. In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. Who said that? That's Paul to the Romans, isn't it?

[37 : 04] Famously. That little phrase ignited the Reformation. In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. That is Paul's emblematic summary statement of what the mystery of Jesus is all about.

Or, if you will, in the discussion time, tell me if this gloss is got it right. I hope so. I live by this. In the gospel, God is vindicated.

God is vindicated even as he vindicates sinners. To the praise of his glorious grace, as Paul says in Ephesians. I think I'll step back from that again.

This has some point, trust me, as I get there. Why is the gospel a good thing? Why is the gospel a good thing, if good it is? That has become, yet again, a hot topic in our culture.

I saw Christopher Hitchens in the day on the BBC. He wanted to be hands down against the Roman Catholic Archbishop from Africa.

[38 : 08] On the point being discussed, on the BBC, the Catholic Church is a bad institution. He wanted to be hands down. Why is the gospel a good thing?

Well, let me run through some current debates and avoid this. Some say that Christianity made capitalism and democracy possible. Thank goodness. One of the Novak brothers, a famous scholar, Mr. Stark at Baylor, argues that.

Christianity made science and technology possible. Alfred North Whitehead, not a Christian, friend of Bertrand Russell, made that case. Some Greens, of course, would hold that against our faith.

Some say that Christianity causes wars. It's a bad thing. And Nietzsche, on the other hand, complained that it encourages peace too much. And on and on it goes.

On it goes. On it goes. About why is Christianity in the world? Why is it important? When was the last time you heard someone say, Well, in that gospel, God's righteousness has been made noble.

[39 : 12] That's why it's important. Who, who, we're really at cross purposes with our culture. We create a new ground as we preach the gospel for understanding it. You just never hear that.

But that's what Peter and Paul say. That God, the righteousness of God, the righteousness of God which vindicates God, and which vindicates us, is made known in the gospel.

And now here is, and Josh will close here. And I hope here is a bridge, tentatively, again as a notion, not a thought. A bridge between shadows and a mature, strong, happy, if you will, Christian faith.

Peter, in this passage, talks about, this is a hard passage to unpack. But I think you unpack it by just seeing three wonderful things in it.

Three wonderful moments. Peter talks about, at verse 3, divine power. His divine power. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

[40 : 22] In the gospel there is a divine power. Everything you need in life will be provided by a divine power. And this power, and its goal, where it ends up in, is by making you nothing less than a participator in the divine nature.

In case you were wondering, can someone tell me what verse that's in? I think it's verse 4. There it is. By which he has granted to us escape from the corruption of the wisdom of the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.

Imagine that. God has given us a divine power which makes you a partaker in the divine nature.

Imagine that. And we have been given the means to doing this thing, knowing the divine power, becoming participants in the divine nature.

And its great and precious promises have been given to us whereby we become participants.

[41 : 38] Can someone tell me where the promises are mentioned? In the Old Testament. Anyway, you have to remember where it is.

God has given us power, divine power, to become participants in the divine nature. And there are divine promises given to us that help us to that end.

So, jumping to my issue. When I try, when I try to put together religion as Peter's shadow, and religion as a narrative of mature salvation, what we do, obviously, is place this first passage about Peter's shadow, we place it for our understanding of it, here in the 2 Peter passage.

That's not my notion, not my notion, not my thought. This is how I try to understand the kind of things that go on in the letter, in Acts, the Acts of the Apostles. I try to understand it within the economy of grace, within the mystery of the gospel.

In a providential moment, someone may so intensely know divine power, so apparently believe in the divine promises, that that person so participates in the divine nature, that that presence may even have a power to heal, as it did with Peter in the letter to the Apostles, in the Acts of the Apostles.

[43 : 34] Peter knew the divine power. He apparently was far along in participating in the divine nature. He had so grasped the promises of the gospel, given to him by the Lord, that his shadow could heal people on occasion.

How else am I to understand this mention of Peter's shadow in Acts 5? There's my way of trying to do it. Our Lord's presence healed.

Our Lord's presence healed. Again, as we're told in the gospels, the hem of his garment could heal people. I find that again a very moving thought, that our Lord's very presence could heal.

And apparently, on occasion, someone like Peter, his very presence, almost with objective, and it cast an objective power to heal people if you just got in its vicinity.

It's very, very strange. But the gospel apparently in some manner instructs me to form a sensibility which believes these things. Our faith has these, just as we draw to a close, our faith has these ongoing contrasts in them, which form, again, a sensibility in the gospel.

[45 : 02] There is in the gospel rhetoric, but there's also logic, as there is throughout all of a culture. There is, McLuhan would call it hot and cool.

There is obviously in scripture, poetry and prose. There is what C.S. Lewis called thick and thin.

I like that distinction. What did Lewis mean by that? In our faith you have bloody deaths, bodies to eat, blood to drink.

Unbelief looks at that and sees that as weird and mysterious. They say that's the thick part of this part. But there's thin stuff. There's Paul's magisterial theology in Romans.

There's Peter unfolding the mystery of divine power, divine promises leading to participation in the divine nature. That's a kind of thin communication.

[46 : 04] It doesn't jump out at you, as it does for me when we're reading Acts. Peter cast his shadow on the ground and the people brought their sick to get near him, because it could heal people.

That's very, very thick. That's poetry. That's hot communication. That's a kind of rhetoric.

Wow! Watch what God can do with a man who believes his promises, who knows his divine power, who participates in his divine nature. So as I believe in the Acts passage, I believe it absent, without

the worry, that I'm now entering into a kind of mindless, silly, pious, reckless, religious world. I don't want to believe foolishly. It dishonors the gospel to believe things in a wrong manner. You could ask questions like, should our worship express both? You know, should public demonstration of worship have this kind of, this presence of mystery in it? I don't know. Protestants have tended to think that there's a kind of periodization, this is a word I just grabbed from nowhere, whereby the strange eruption of power, like shadows and garments, diminishes or even disappears.

[47 : 34] It kind of made me a reticent periodization that Protestants have taught. I don't know. Reading Acts for me, and maybe it shouldn't, shows my shallow curiosity that it should be healed.

But reading Acts and hearing it, but reading Acts and hearing it talked about in our community raises some of these questions for me. They may not be very important, but I've tried to think them through. Peter makes them, it seems to me, the Peter mystery in the New Testament.

That that, again, that that, again, his shadow could heal. And yet he taught in a cruel way, in a prosy way, in a reasonable way, if you will, within faith, within the economy of grace, that yes, yes, Jesus has brought us a divine power.

He's given us great and precious promises. And through this, you can become a participant in the divine nature.

That last bit, you know, is something the Orthodox have all really emphasized. They run with it.

[48 : 51] Salvation is to be deified. God became a man so that we might become a god. They read that very strongly, rightly or wrongly.

Peter, again in conclusion, he took part in a miraculous catch of fish once. I've never done that. He saw bread and a fish multiplied into a feast.

Again, I've never seen that. I've seen it run out at church picnics. He once went fishing because his Lord instructed him and he caught a coin to pay the temple tax.

Peter had quite a life. And again, he walked on water once. He had such faith. He so participated. We talked about this Tuesday night or so ago.

Peter, I think, so participated in a divine power. So believed the promise of his Lord's word. That he actually walked on water for a while as his Lord was walking on water.

[49 : 55] He knew the divine power. The divine participation. Peter did all that. He knew Jesus and therefore he knew power.

Jesus teaches us what power really is. It's not reckless. It's not irresponsible. It's not a silly piety. But Jesus teaches us what power is.

I think we can call Peter, Blessed Peter. We should make much of him in our church. Because in other churches, perhaps made wrong of him, we should not make less of him than the New Testament does.

He is Blessed Peter, our teacher of the Gospel. A man who threw a shadow that could heal people. Who participated in the divine nature magnificently somehow.

And this is, we are called in our own little way as people who have an equal standing with Peter in the righteousness of God.

[50 : 56] We are called along Peter's pathway. And he is following Jesus. He is our great. He is our princely scholar. And we are called in our own little people who follow Peter and Paul and John and all these other wonderful people that are integral to the Gospel.

Whew! There are notions, whether or not they became thoughts, you can now tell me. But to shield myself from that, I'll say a prayer first. Lord, we thank you for the Gospel.

And we admit that we are children in these things. But you told us to become as little children. This will help us to just ask simple questions. We look, Lord, for your rich Gospel answers.

You're the one who brought us this great mystery. Which is going to heal us completely, forever and ever. We pray this. Our Lord God, in the name of your Son, Jesus.

Amen. Thank you. Amen. Thank you, Harvey.

[52 : 07] You've been on your vest. Checks in the mail. For today. The word and the spirit is reminding us of today. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

I'm thinking perhaps of the personal choice that you made to go forward.

In believing in this? In believing. And working. I'm just wondering what element that would play in the process.

Well, there are rather challenging answers out there in the literature. Bonhoeffer is quoted by Mr. Webster saying that I will crucify my intellect as I read Scripture.

[53 : 30] Only, but only as I read Scripture. There's a fancy Latin phrase for that. It helps soften the glow of it. That's what it means. I'll become as a child.

And I'll believe. And in that simplicity of belief, I expect God to speak to me. He's told, commanded me to believe in the Gospel. Even though I don't understand, it's very difficult.

I was surprised that Bonhoeffer taught that. It seems to be magnificent. Bonhoeffer thought like that. Yeah. So, he chose, I will believe, because God instructs me to believe.

Yeah. I will believe greatly. Not that I don't think he'd get hung up on Peter's shadow. But nevertheless, it is there in Scripture. There's these moments of Peter's shadow.

The Lord's, the hem of his robes. There are these moments where, now the Catholics will say to us, the smart Catholics will say that if you scratch a Protestant, you're all bolt-mots.

[54 : 30] You're all bolt-mots. You're all bolt-mots. You're all demithologizers. You stop believing. We believe greatly. We have things in our churches that heal.

We have holy water. We have things you can touch. We are high on this. We have a sacrament where Jesus shows up. So, I take their words. I don't believe what they teach, but I see their point. It's not an accident they'd say that bolt-mots is a Protestant. You people demithologize everything. You're saved by faith.

You're saved. You're so invisibly saved, you Protestants. You've never seen anything. There are no Peter's shadows in you. So, I'm trying to, in the mystery of the Gospels, work out an answer to that.

With Rome, the Magisterium instructed me to believe, but then there's David Hume over here in my own culture, which I think I love my culture, by the way. Hume says, well, why do you believe this?

[55 : 29] Why do you believe that? He says, I'm trying to work, this is, you know, my own little neurotic intellectual journey. Don't take it too seriously.

But, yeah, I love Peter's shadow. I love these moments in the gospel. They're very lovely. Sir? I see a link between the divine and the material in the early church and the use of handkerchiefs that see human too.

I'm not going to be a shadow. I'm sorry, what was that last? Well, the use of handkerchiefs. Yes, yes. Paul's handkerchief could heal people. Well, there's a link between the divine and the material in the early church.

Yeah, you're very much a Protestant when you say that last phrase in the early church. Rome says, we've still got it. You Protestants are always remembering, we've got it now.

That's what Rome says. Between Rome and David Hume, I'm trying to walk the glorious Anglican road. Successfully or not, I don't know.

[56 : 33] Professor, I brace myself. Sir, you have made us think. But it also made a problem for me in that I cannot detect where the scripture says that the shadow itself does anything.

It seems to me that if one addresses a group of teenagers coming out from a popular concert, they will have done everything in their powers to get within the shadow of the famous performer.

Isn't that what this is saying? We don't specifically say that there is a healing act directly associated with it. So you're reading the first half of 15, correct me if I'm wrong, so that they even carried out the sick in the streets and laid them on beds and pallets.

That, as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them. That may have been their superstition expecting something that didn't happen. But, I would read it as there was healing there. And also... Well, I said you read that there is healing there, but it seems to me that the whole of the passage from 2 Peter 1 expresses why there was healing there.

[57 : 45] Oh, that's my... I thought that was my point. Did I not make that clear? Yeah. I'm trying to put this in the Gospel. But, you know, obviously my unreconstructed Protestant human perspective is limiting my...

I find it difficult to see this matter of... Well, if not here, correct me if I'm wrong, certainly in other places, Paul's handkerchiefs, the transporting of Philip from one place to another...

There's a lot of mighty acts of God, Tom Wright would call them, and we probably call it supernaturalism. And I think it's implied here, and it makes a better title to talk, Peter's shadow, than Paul's hanky.

But... Initial, initial, they wear initial. We're the fortune. But I think there's a strong implication here at supernaturally, when it's a shadow.

But that's a professor talking, making fine distinctions. Mr. Chandler, please. Bill, Bill, Bill. Bill, Bill. I think it's... To carry along more or less what Olav was saying, that this is a direct invitation to us to get close to what we're hearing and reading, and get into the shadow of what Peter is saying, and we participate in the blessing of it.

[59 : 19] And, uh... So I think that's a much safer position for myself in this, otherwise you do enter into superstition. But the shadow itself is quite meaningful as a parable of closeness.

And, uh... So I don't think... I don't think we can be trapped by that idea of the shadow itself.

Yeah, correct me if I'm... Well, that's what I've been trying to say. Yes. I'm trying to take Acts 5 and swallow it up, if you will. Not in unbelief, but in Peter's cool communication about power and participation in the divine nature.

Thank you. You said better... And you said it so shortly. Why didn't you say that? Sarah, please. Do you see a parallel in this passage with... Well, I'm seeing a parallel with the friends who brought the sick man and put him on the roof and broke a hole in the roof and lowered him down to give him Jesus' presence?

Because you've got people who have got the faith to bring the sick to the shadow. Yeah, the faith of the people who want to be in the shadow. Yeah. The faith of the men who carried the sick man out to the roof.

[60 : 34] The faith of the man who could just lower me down. So there's so many operative levels of faith here. The people who brought them up aren't really mentioned. Yeah. And the man who's waiting for the shadow. Well, thank you very much. Yes, and that makes my point.

Again, wonderful. Thank you. I want it to not stand alone in pious, recklessness, but to be seen in the mystery of the economy of grace as well.

In the mystery of the gospel. That's all. That's my lame little point here. It could spin out into mere superstition. That's what I think is mainly one of...

The rationalist sees religion as spinning out of control and making everything into spookiness. We don't... Even in the science debates, as I understand them, they sometimes say, if we allow a little bit of creation science in the door, we're going to start saying God did it and that prohibits further inquiry.

So we don't like you religious people hanging around you reckless with your spooks. I've heard it put that way by a philosophy. I didn't mean that in a nice way, I guess. Again, maybe a small point, but it's just something that interests me.

[61 : 45] I wonder why none of the rest dare join them, but the people held them in high honor. It almost implies a kind of aura of sanctity and set-apartness of these people.

They had been with Jesus and they participated in His power. In the gospel... Is it John's gospel that has the people coming to arrest Jesus being, in a sense, intimidated by the Lord's presence and power?

These moments are in our faith. We recognize them. We want to believe them again. The gospel is truly one of them. Any other way.

So, probably, it would have been better for someone who's good at exegesis just to unpack this line by line for us someday. It's a rich passage. I haven't even touched on this.

Why do we have these things? Why do we have virtue to faith and brotherly and self-control? Knowledge is spread there.

[62 : 55] Is Peter correcting silly belief that doesn't get down to the business of this kind of stuff?

It's cool. It's pro-ed. It's good stuff. Any other?

Dr. Sheila. Well, I found this really quite upsetting. That was the point, Sean. You had a feeling. And to make your day.

Yeah. You're comparable with the lady touching the images of the garment. This is a purposeful activity on her part, which, you know, attached to her beneath.

The shadow fell on the sick and the unsick. It's kind of out there, you know, changing as he moves through the crowd. That doesn't seem like a parallel illustration to me at all.

[63 : 58] And I think a too literal look at this in terms of the shadow has healing power is going to lead to collecting relics.

The people of Jose, in this bottle, is a bit of a shadow. Like they said about the virgin's milk and the sweat with somebody's forehead. You don't believe in those things for Tom Howard?

Come on. Although I have increased heresy quite recently. I'm sorry. Yeah, well, Sheila, but I am trying to take this stuff that you're pointing to and put it in the 2 Peter.

That's the context, that's what I'm saying. I thought I would comfort you after upsetting you about shadows and hems of garments and stuff. Because we are, we Protestants, and we've got to, we're all demathologizers.

I can hear the Catholic over my shoulder saying, yeah, you Protestants don't believe in that. And I hear that witness from them, increasingly. I've heard a talk about brilliant Catholic priests, St. Peter's and St. Paul's, in our fair city, a scholarly priest.

[65 : 05] Just gave a talk on angels. Knowing them. Talking to them, because they pray for you. And they think like that.

And I notice it myself, there's a kind of, no, that's not me. I back away from that. And I'm trying to understand my backing away from it in the Gospel, not just that superstition.

I can be my David Hughes self for a while. That's reckless silliness. But he'd say, do you read the Gospels of the Protestants? The angels, little children, behold the Father's face.

And they do believe we all have a guardian angel enough. Anyway. So it is an issue. See, there is a tension between our, in our kind of modern believing and a bunch of issues here which, again, I'm not doing, I'm not unfolding that.

Well, please. Well, in this day and age, we still, I don't have a problem with it and maybe that's because of the rules to Catholic, but in this day and age, when Dr. Packer's here, I don't think we worship him.

[66 : 12] But there's something about the man and about a lot of people in the church that we feel differently around them. And we wouldn't just run up to them and be ourselves in all cases.

And there are people who, and I know, you know, in the world, people in all different races and religions have people like that. And when I think of being near Peter, if I would be this present, I can probably feel differently.

And my belief is that there is, and because I believe, I believe it is the grace of God, and we can feel it when we're around people who are very close to God and who are maybe stronger than faith or, I used to think that meant they were holier than me.

But there's a difference. And it's a feeling. And, you know, we could start to break that apart into quarries and magic and all the rest of it.

But if we take all of that away and just stay with the fact that Christ does dwell within us, and hopefully he will pass with him, then that has got to cause some kind of effect in our need.

[67 : 25] And I think it has to be noticeable when people are around us. I, I, yes. I just agree with everything you said. Just saying it's a thing to be understood in a measured way in the Gospel.

But I, I heard, as I heard you talking, I hear you saying yes. There are people who abound in certain things. And if they do, in the Christian community, they will, we've all had the experience of they stand out sometimes.

I was in a Bible study once with a daughter of a missionary family. My name was Sue. And every time she spoke, the room went quiet. And we were a bunch of chatterboxes.

Anken Priest then was our leader. But every time she spoke, you knew, she knew Jesus. You just knew it. She just was a girl who knew Jesus.

She abounded in something, in faith, in virtue. So I, I just agree with you. I agree. So there is something to be taught by the idea in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts of presence being powerful sometimes.

[68 : 38] It used to be called the aroma of Christ. Sure. It still is, I hope. Thank you for that. That's a lovely comment. That the fragrance of our Lord can be in some people.

Oh, yeah. I'm repeating myself. I'm saying I see it planted firmly. And I hope, not just because I want to do this. I see it planted firmly in a passage light.

There's other passages. But light to Peter 1, 1 below. And that's the Gospel understanding of this mystery of presence, Peter's shadow. I hope this wasn't, this wasn't meant to be a kind of, in any way, throwing doubt or any problems to, with, not problems in the sense of unbelief.

Just I want to understand it maturely in the Gospel. I want to believe. I'm with Tom Howard. It smells like a miracle. I, it is. He said, I'm not Volta. I'm not, I, I want a radio and I believe in angels.

He had it all raw. Most Jewish scholars often do. They know a lot, but they don't understand it. I'm not, I'm not. I'm not.

[69 : 48] I'm not. I'm not. I'm not. I'm not. They don't understand it. I, um, came to a full understanding. And, um, Bruce Waltke said it. That, uh, he heard it when he was younger and now when he's in his seventies he really believes it.

That the greatest enemy in the church is ignorance of the word of God. And what you've been saying is, is when we're formed by Holy Scripture to be the church.

and that's good the tradition I was brought up we called our reverends pastors which means shepherd, I mean you've got a good shepherd and you have an opportunity to grow up and you're shattered and you're blessed and I like my job because I could go through my whole eight hours without saying a word and that's what I like but sometimes when I get enthused I start talking and that's good I mean when the love of God is coming through you and you love your name they can see it I like Peter after a post-concern he wasn't nothing to sniff at before but thank you for putting up with notions and when they become thoughts we'll try again and.." and het those with the Thank you.

Thank you.

[72 : 47] Thank you.

Thank you.