

li Peter - How Firm Is Your Faith?

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the apostles' testimony and the prophets' words as a firm foundation for our faith, pointing us to Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone.

Duration: 16:25

Scripture: Luke 7:11

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the credibility of the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' ministry. He highlights various events where people witnessed Jesus' miracles and teachings, such as raising a widow's son, the Sermon on the Mount, and the wedding feast in Cana. The speaker also mentions the role of the Holy Spirit in utilizing the individual personalities of the writers of the Bible to convey the message of God. The sermon concludes by affirming the unwavering commitment of the eyewitnesses to share what they have seen and heard.

Transcript

Glory is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. We were there, we saw, and we heard. The time came when Peter and John were hailed before the magistrates of their day, and appearing before the magistrates, they were victimized, they were abused, they were slandered, they were misrepresented, they were pressured, they were persecuted.

If these men had invented a lie or propagated a fable, and were threatened with imprisonment and even execution, would they have persisted in giving the same story without any alteration? These men were so convinced of what they had seen, they were so persuaded by what they had heard, that they would not change their story. As a matter of fact, Peter and John, in Acts chapter 4, are represented as defying the power structure of their day and saying, You judge whether we should obey God or obey you. As for us, we cannot but speak about the things which we have heard and seen.

They were eyewitnesses, they were there. They were there when he gathered around himself a cluster of disciples, calling them to his side. They were there at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, where he turned water into wine and gave them the first glimpse of his glory.

They were there when he multiplied loaves and fishes for the feeding of the hungry masses. They were there when he was entertained in the home of Matthew, a converted tax collector. They were there when

he made the lame to walk and the blind to see and the deaf to hear.

They were there on that route to the funeral when he raised the only son of a widowed woman in the town of Nain. They were there when he gave the matchless teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. They saw with their eyes, they heard with their ears, and they give you their testimony as honest men and are willing to lay down their lives so persuaded are they of what they cannot and dare not deny.

We made known to you the majesty and the glory and the power with which Christ came. We were there, we saw, we heard, and we give you our word. But the testimony of the apostle, the apostolic witness, rests on something else.

In the town of Cluny in France, there are the ruins of an abbey destroyed by the rationalists and secularists of the French Revolution. And on one of the remaining walls of that ancient abbey that goes back to the 10th century, you can see the traces of statues. These were statues of the apostles.

And where the feet of the apostles would have been, under each of them there were the faint outlines and traces and relic remembrances of the prophets. The apostles of the New Testament stood on the prophets of the Old Testament. It isn't as though the only work we have is the work of the apostles.

Beneath them, basic to them and fundamental to them, is the word of the prophets of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, when the apostles preached in the first century A.D. and they made a statement about Jesus Christ, they themselves would dig back in the pages of the Old Testament and say, don't take just our word for it, this is that which was spoken of by the prophets. And what we have seen in Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the prophecies and the promises of the Old Testament.

Now one promise or prophecy can be fulfilled and it's a coincidence. But when you have so many, numbering by the score and even to the hundred mark, the apostles based their teaching on that of the prophets. Isaiah 714, And the apostles, reflecting on the story of the birth of Jesus, draw on that passage from Isaiah to say, this is that which was spoken of by the prophets.

The prophet Micah says that the Messiah is going to be born, not in Rome, the center of imperial power, not in Greece with its fabled philosophers and wisdom, not in Jerusalem, the center of organized religion, but in the little town of Bethlehem where David, the shepherd who became king, had grown up as a boy. That is where the shepherd of Israel, who would be a king greater than David, would see the light of day. And when it happened, the apostles referred back to the prophets to say, this is what was spoken and thus it has come to pass.

Zechariah, in his little-known prophecies, was to describe the way in which the Messiah would come and state his royal claim, riding upon a donkey and accompanied by its foal, a king of righteousness and peace, coming in humility without the chariots of war. It was also Zechariah who said that the shepherd of Israel would be terminated, given his pink slip, evaluated at worth the price of a slave at thirty pieces of silver. And so, centuries later, it came to pass in fulfillment of the prophetic word.

And the prophet Isaiah, in the fifty-third chapter of his book, more than seven hundred years before the dawn of the darkness of Good Friday, said that there would be one who would be like a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness that we should desire him, whose visage would be marred more than any man's visage, who would be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, one from whom men would hide their faces in shame, fear, disgust, one whom we did esteem

stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, for some crime that he had done, until we realized that he was totally innocent and was bearing our punishment, that he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, chastised for our peace, beaten with stripes that we might be healed, that all we like sheep would go astray, and the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of all the wayward. But after completing his sacrifice, he would come forth with strength and divide the spoils of his victory with his people, make intercession for transgressors, and be numbered among the rich in his dying hour. And so it came to pass, in the passion narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the psalmist in the sixteenth psalm said, Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

And so it came to pass that on the third day after his death, Jesus rose from the grave. God spared him from the corruption of the grave, crowned him with glory and with honor on his resurrection day. The apostles gave their word of witness as to what they saw and what they heard.

And the prophets also give a firm basis for our faith, because what they prophesied and promised has come true in the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The word of the prophet, says Peter, is like a light shining in the darkness, showing us the way to go, pointing us to Jesus Christ, who is the Son of Righteousness, the light of the world, the bright and morning star. And he says you do well to give attention to the word of the prophets, to hear it, to believe it, to obey it.

For after all, he says, the words of the prophets, which are a firm foundation for your faith, did not arise out of their subconscious. The words of the prophets were not invented by the prophets themselves. They were but the messengers of a message that originated in the heart and mind of no one less than Almighty God.

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. And that expression, were carried along, is a very picturesque one. Here is a ship in the harbor.

Its moorings are slipped, its sails are upped, and then the wind gets into the sails and propels that ship across the waters. The writers of the scriptures were like fashioned hulls, and they put up their sails, and the Spirit of God, the very breath of God, got into their sails and impelled them and carried them forward. The Spirit of God didn't obliterate their personalities.

The contemplative, reflective mode of the Apostle John is seen in his gospel. Matthew, the tax collector, concerned to set things right with his own Jewish kinsmen, majors on messianic prophecies. Luke, the beloved physician, traveling companion of the Apostle Paul, having seen the vision of the world and its need of Christ and being himself committed to cross-cultural ministry, mentions over and over again the events that show the widening purpose of the grace of God for Jew and Gentile, male and female, young and old, bond and free.

Paul, the great scholar, is shown putting together his arguments, massing his arguments for an assault upon the mind of the natural man to show him that man is a sinner desperately in need of grace and that God is willing to bestow it to all who are open to receive it. The characteristics of the individual writers, their vocabularies, their ways of expression, their temperament, all come through because the Holy Spirit did not obliterate their personality. What the Holy Spirit did was to utilize their personality to get the message across.

They were the instruments of revelation, but what impelled them was the spirit of the living God, and the message they delivered did not originate with man, it came through man from God. And so we believe that we have a firm foundation for our faith. The testimony of the apostles who were eyewitnesses of his majesty and the sure word of prophecy that finds its fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we rest our confidence on what God has said and what God has done in the life of our Lord.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that there is a firm foundation for our faith. The witness of the apostles, the words of the prophets, and beneath it all, Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone.

May we daily build upon this foundation as we come to a greater knowledge of your word, and as we believe it and obey it. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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