

Prophetic Word Confirmed 2

Mac Graham

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I like to turn again to 2 Peter 1:19 *'So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts'*

1 Peter 5:12 *'Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!'*

Luke 22: 31 – 32 *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* These are the verses where Jesus told Peter that He was going to deny Him.

Matthew 16: 13 – 20 *'Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."* Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ'.

Let us pray.

Lord we do rejoice that we gather unto the King of kings tonight. We are so grateful that You are Lord and King over all things. And Lord, tonight we come in a very fresh way and we offer ourselves unto You. Lord we are thankful that You have made all provisions through Christ Jesus, and by faith we lay hold of this provision. Lord we come very dependent upon You for speaking, translating and hearing. And Lord the desire of our hearts is that we not only be hearers of the word but doers of the word. And Lord we are thankful that as we gather tonight, we can gather unto the living word. Lord as we touch upon something tonight that may sound familiar to us, we pray that the Holy Spirit will make them very fresh and new in our hearts. We pray that familiarity with some of Your words and teachings will not be a hindrance. But You through the very living word of God come and pierce through our heart. We want just to be still before You; to settle down from a long day and allow You to receive glory at this time. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

We shared last night that little phrase ‘the prophetic word was made more sure to him’ in verse 19 in 2 Peter. As we consider this phrase we see how Peter through his life with the Lord and how as he was raised by his parents, he had much teaching. He knew the prophets in the Old Testament very well. But he had all of these teachings in his head. How did the Lord make all these real in his life? This is the real burden that we have. As the people of God in this hour, we are greatly blessed to be able to receive much teaching. But how much of it can we live out through our life? We desire that we can have a testimony like Peter. Then the teaching will be made sure in our life and the teaching will be a reality in our life. Once I thought I saw something there. But we saw just dimly. Now through the enabling and experience of the Holy Spirit, there is a reality that captures our hearts and we can walk and can be strengthened these last days. We know difficult times will come. Peter wrote the 1 and 2 epistles with the purpose of strengthening the brothers. He knew that difficult times were ahead of them. Brothers and sisters, difficult times are ahead of us. And what was good for those in the first century is good for us today. We have to have the reality of Christ within our heart. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. And as we allow His life to work within us, we will be able to stand firm all the way to the end, no matter what comes upon us. Maybe things can overwhelm us. But praise God that throughout history, we see that there was a secret life within those whom the world considered no use and naturally very weak. In time of crisis it is this life that strengthened them and allowed them to go through the crisis not just somehow but triumphantly.

We see this in Peter’s life. We saw one time a little slave girl asked Peter ‘do you know Christ’. Peter trembled before this little girl and said I did not. But then we see Peter stood before four thousands, and declared the Christ, the Son of the living God. It was not that Peter was strengthened in himself. But Peter allowed the life of the Lord to be his strength; Peter allowed the life of Christ to be his portion. This was his burden for the saints in the first century. And this is the burden during our time together.

Last night we saw how the Lord took one named Simon and transformed him into one named Peter. It was just a simple phrase of ‘follow me’. And tonight we want to continue with how the Lord worked in Peter’s life. In Matthew 16, we see how Peter got the revelation of the church. And when Peter first received this revelation of the church, he did not even know what it was. He never heard the word ‘church’ before. But the Lord told Peter ‘upon this rock I will build my church’. Maybe Peter had a small glimpse of something, but the reality of the church had to work in Peter. As Peter followed the Lord, as Peter allowed the Holy Spirit to work within him, Peter was able to testify of what the church is. It had become real within him. I think many of us have the same experience.

I remember years ago when I saw something of the church, in my youthful days I go telling people I saw the church. I could talk about it. I could tell people what others have told me and I thought I saw the church. But was it real in my heart or was it just knowledge in my head? Praise God that it did not end

with where it started as we yield ourselves to the cross and to the Holy Spirit. Those words that we have heard in our head can become life in our heart. And we see this in Peter. It is interesting that the more I go along, the less I know what the church is. I do not know whether this is a testimony of you brother and sister. We see in part. Sometime when we first started, we think we see everything so clearly. But then we realize we just see in part. Brothers and sisters, as we touch the Lord's heart on this matter of the church, and we see how precious it is in His heart and what a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, we really have to confess that we really see in part. But praise God, one day we will see in full that glorious church. Praise God that we can have that hope within us. Praise Him that we have that hope within us because that is what holds us in rough times.

If you really want to suffer, try to go the way of the church. We can say how glorious the church is but then all of a sudden there are these brothers and sisters that we need to put up with. It is these precious living stones that are always hitting us in the wrong way. As we rub together, all of a sudden we say, wait a minute, this church is not that good after all. It is kind of tough to put up with someone like Peter, so impetuous going here and going there. Then we get to put up with these passive ones who always just sit there with their head bowed, trying to look so spiritual. Somehow we think if we sit in a certain position and put our head in a right position, we look very spiritual. You know when you pray, you pray in a certain tone. There is a certain way to pray. If you are too loud you are in the flesh. You get to pray with that soft gentle voice and everyone will say how spiritual you are. Now there is a great diversity within the family of God. This morning I was so blessed at the Lord's table, hearing so many voices expressing the love of God in so many different ways. We have a taste and that taste is so good now. How much better will it be in the future! That is why the Lord is telling us to hang in there. I know that is not a very spiritual term. It is not in the scripture. But we have to be those who hang in there. When the going gets tough, you get to be able to stick it out. And the one thing we know for sure is that it will be the hardest thing in our life that we have to go through if we want the reality of the church to work within our heart. Now how is that for encouragement? Oftentimes if we really want to experience the Lord in fullness, we want to quit once a week. We get so frustrated. We get fed up. It is never our fault. It is always those others. But somehow we get something within us that holds us. Peter had something that helped him get through all the things that he had to get through in the Book of Acts in his life. And we have to see that we need to have that reality in our life. The teaching of the church will get us only so far. But when we come to those difficult times, we need to have that taste of reality within us to hold us. Then we can stay. Praise God Peter hung in there.

But how did Peter start? We just read in Matthew 16 when they were there together, the Lord said 'who did men say I am'? And Peter was able to come back and testify Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Lord said 'flesh and blood did not reveal this to you'. And this is so important for us

to see that the reality of the church comes from revelation; the revelation that our Lord opens our heart to see how His heart is. And is that revelation fresh to us or is it something that we can just look back on? The Lord desires that the revelation of the church will be fresh in our hearts every day. And we see that when we start out, it really is a work in progress. Whether we are speaking about our individual life or church life, it is a work in process and the Lord is doing this glorious, great work.

We mentioned last night that we were going to talk about Peter's individual life last night and tonight we will talk about the church life. It is really one life. They are interrelated. We cannot separate these lives. But for fellowship, we can distinguish between them. What we do in our individual life greatly impacts our church life. Sometimes we are not aware of that. But oh, what an impact it is.

Now we also mentioned how the Lord first called Peter and told Peter 'I am going to make you a fisher of men'; and then later after Peter denied the Lord and had been restored, how the Lord called Peter to shepherd His flock. The Lord did this great work of taking Peter, a rough fisherman and called him to be a shepherd. In John 21, we saw that Peter was restored publicly. And in 1 Corinthians we saw how Peter was restored privately; of how the Lord had that private time with Peter. It had to be very precious and very saintly because there was nothing about it in the scripture. Brothers and sisters, sometimes when we have encounters with the Lord, they are so precious with us that they need to be kept within our heart. Yes, there are times when the Lord touches us and we need to share with brothers and sisters for encouragement, but there are other times when He deals with us and strengthens us that are so precious to us that it has to be kept in our heart. And this is the way the Lord restored Peter.

And we know that the Lord publicly restored Peter in John 21: 15 *'so when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs"'*. The Lord called Peter and said 'Peter, do you have that absolute agape love for me?' Peter knew that he did not. Peter was able to say, Lord, you know that I am attached to you; I have that filial, brotherly love. The Lord repeated the second time and Peter responded the same way. Finally the Lord asked Peter, do you have that brotherly love for me? And Peter could only say, Lord you know all things. Peter had learned a great lesson. He had learned that his love for the Lord had limitations. But the Lord's love for him has no limitations. It is interesting as we look at the dialogue here. At the end of each dialogue, the Lord asked Peter to do something. First He said feed my lamb, then shepherd my sheep and finally feed my sheep. The word that caught my attention is the word 'mine'. In Matthew 16, the Lord said I will build my church; Peter, I want you to take care of these lambs, these sheep, they are mine. When we really stop and think about that, the Lord had been to Calvary and had risen; these ones that He was calling my lamb are His precious ones. It seems that the Lord trusts His most precious possessions unto Peter. We know the verse 'for God so loved the world' and He died for us. These were His lambs that He bought with a price. And He

was entrusting them to Peter. And I think this was overwhelming to Peter because he knew in himself he could not do this. But He knew the Lord could.

Brothers and sisters, just as the Lord called Peter to care for His sheep and lambs, within the assembly there are those who are called shepherds. But really each and every one of us is called to that pastoral function. It is not limited to a few. We are all called to care for one another. We are all called to look out for one another. But are we relying on our own strength or are we looking unto Him to do this? It is interesting that at this time of the year we start making a lot of resolutions. As the year starts, I am not going to do this; I am going to do this. And even we can do it within our Christian life. What is the number one Christian resolution? I am going to read my bible every day. And it is followed by I am going to get up early. We might make a little way in that. But is the Lord really interested in our resolutions? No, the Lord is interested in our availability to Him. He is not looking for our verbal commitments. Peter said I will never deny you. He is not looking for that. He is just simply looking for us to be available to Him. And when He calls us to that place of caring for one another, we will be in a place where we are available to do that.

And this is what He was calling Peter to do. It is wonderful if you stop and think about Peter; how he was called to be that fisher of man. And this really fit Peter's temperament. He was bold and unafraid and so rough. Peter was so brave he stepped out and walked on the water. He actually did it when the Lord called him. But we see Peter in his natural self. We all know that Peter was a fisherman. But now the Lord was calling Peter to be a shepherd. A shepherd is so loving and compassionate. He has to watch out for others and he is tender with all these ones. What a call and this was beyond Peter's natural life. But there was a life beyond Peter that could be a shepherd. And there is a life within us where that desire of pastoral care will come forth. And the Lord was showing Peter the secret to this. The secret to this shepherding and caring for each other is love. Without that love there will be no shepherding because the shepherd loves the sheep and lay down his life for the sheep. And the Lord said to Peter, do you love me. And Peter had learned that it was not his love that could do that. And later on when Peter wrote his first epistle, he encouraged them to keep fervent in their love. Keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins. Praise God that Peter was learning to be that shepherd.

How did he learn that? He learned that the Lord is his shepherd. He learned as David learned. Peter's testimony was that 'my Lord is my shepherd'. And do we know that? Or is it just a cute little verse that we can recite so easily. Do we know the reality of the Lord being our shepherd? I love how it says that in Psalm 23. It does not say the Lord is the shepherd. It does not even say the Lord is our shepherd. But it says the Lord is my shepherd. It is personal for each and every one of us. The Lord wants to be that person for us. As we allow the Lord to be our shepherd, we can respond to that. The Lord shepherded Peter his whole life on earth. And as the Lord shepherded Peter, Peter was able to shepherd others. As

we allow the Lord to shepherd us, to lead us beside the still waters, to quiet our souls, we learn to rely on Him and will be able to shepherd others through His grace. This is why in 1 Peter he wrote several times about shepherd because it was so real to him. Peter said we are continually strayed like sheep. But we return to the guardian and shepherd of our soul. And He spoke of how that chief shepherd will reappear. The reality of that shepherd grasped Peter's heart. And he was conveying that and telling that to others. May we know that as we talk about this church life and caring for others, it is in that spirit of gentle shepherd. This is what Peter wrote of. Peter wrote later in 1 Peter how those words from the Lord asking him to tend for His lambs and care for His sheep were made more sure to him. And we want that word to make sure in our hearts.

Now we see after the Gospel of John it historically goes on to the Book of Acts. We are not going to be able to look at all the events in Peter's life in the Book of Acts. We want to touch on a few. As we turn to Acts chapter 1, we know the Lord had ascended and He told the disciples to go and wait for the promise of the Father. There were about one hundred and twenty gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem, and they were continually devoting themselves to prayer. And then we come to verses 15 and 16, *'At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus'.*

Before we get into looking into these verses, I would like for us to take a little sidetrack for a second. And I want us to see how Peter really knew the word of God. I am afraid that many times we have misrepresented Peter. We think that because he was a rough, hard fisherman, that somehow he was this big goofball who went around. We do not think of Peter as someone who really knew the scripture. But then we really miss what our brother really knew. Again we are going to look only briefly. But as you look at verse 16 it says *'the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David'*, we know that Peter knew this from the Old Testament.

And then when he saw and experienced and that word was made more sure and real to him, Peter stood up and said in Acts 2:16 *'this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel'*. He said those words on the day of Pentecost when everybody was running around and speaking in tongues and people were wondering what was going on. And again we see that Peter had known the word before. He had that experience what Joel had said hundreds of years ago was real. This has been made more sure and the reality was right there. And as we continue through this sermon, we see that he quoted David from Psalm 16 in 2: 25 – 26. Again we see that he was quoting David from Psalm 32 in 2: 30. He again quoted David from Psalm 110 in 2: 34. He had that word in him; he knew it. And he saw the reality of it. We spoke a little bit about Peter's second sermon last night. Again it was full of the Old Testament. In chapter 3:18 Peter said, *'But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the*

prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled'. Then in 3:22 He quoted Moses, that prophet; in verse 24, he spoke of Samuel; in verse 25 he spoke of Abraham.

Peter was raised up in such a wonderful home that he knew these and held to these and they had become real to him. I think one of the most unheralded mothers in the New Testament was Peter's and Andrew's mother. Think of them as parents who would take Peter and Andrew Sabbath after Sabbath to hear the word ranted. We do not really know the history of them as children. We have to be careful how we imagine. But we can see the fruit of how they were raised as young ones. Think of how their parents dutifully raising them up in the traditions of Judaism. Sometimes you wonder the parents would say, 'was this worth anything? we take Peter to the synagogue and he fell asleep; Andrew sat there so quietly but Peter always squirming around; was he really listening to anything? He was texting his friends and he was not listening at all'. And all of a sudden there were this father and mother saying, that was my son proclaiming that. This had to be a great encouragement to fathers and mothers. Those years of their taking care of these young ones. At times they wondered whether the children were getting anything. But then all of a sudden there was that blossom of flower coming. We see this in Peter. Praise God. I do not think that it is half-haphazardly that God chose His disciples. He knew Simon and Andrew. He knew that Andrew recognized there is the Son. They were looking into themselves and in their hearts. We are so thankful to God. I wished the scripture would talk a little bit about their parents. But they were hidden and that speaks volume. There are so much what a father and mother do was hidden. But God sees it in eternity. It becomes an encouragement to us in our hearts. You can be frustrated at times. Is this really worth it? The wonderful thing about children is that within a split second, you can love them, and the next second you are ready to wring their throats. Praise God that He allows us to go through that. Be encouraged by Andrew and Peter. Through those young ages it was to get the word to them and then at certain time, that prophetic word was made more sure in their hearts. It was made real to him. And at a time, it will make real to our next generation. May we be faithful unto Him. It is not only being faithful in sharing the word, but faithful in our lives being a testimony unto Him.

We now look back to Acts chapter 1. We see it was wonderful how Peter stood up in the midst of the one hundred and twenty, and the first word that came out of his mouth was brethren. He no longer was independent. But he started to see how he was related to all others. All of a sudden he saw that they were all related and they were his brothers and his sisters. And they were praying in one mind. They were being drawn together by the Lord. This was a great lesson to Peter because normally we would characterize Peter as a strong, independent person and in himself; he did not need anyone else. But praise God, he saw that they were in this altogether now. How we need to learn this lesson from Peter because within the church today, one of the greatest problems is the spirit of independence. We all say with our mouth He is the head, but then we do our own things. It was just like in the day of Judges. It said there

was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. As we come together, I say I am free to do this; I am free to go anywhere and I am free to serve. I will just go wherever I want to go. May the Lord really convict us of our independence.

Now if we look at our own physical body, what happens to our body when a cell becomes independent in our body. This independent cell is called cancer. Now this is an accountant talking about stuff like this. I am not giving you any medical terms. This is just the way this accountant sees it. But if we think about it, this is just a matter of an independent cell in the body. I google something and I am going to read it tonight. This is about cancer cells. It says, what characterizes cancer cells are that they have been decidedly independent, carrying on their own activities without regards to the other cells around them. They are just doing their own things. It says most normal cells are monitored by a myriad of mechanism that keeps them working in cooperation with the brain and other cells around them. The normal cells are under the brain, under the headship there. This is what the Lord wants. But no, the cancer cells are independent and move or migrate to places where they do not belong and create mischief which gives rise to tumors. Normal cells maintain normal growth and maintain normal relation to the rest of the body. But cancer cells grow and divide independent of the cells around them.

Brothers and sisters, we have too many independent ones within Christ today. This is why we look to Peter. Peter was saying I am not independent anymore. But I am a brother to you. Praise the Lord, brothers and sisters, within the body of Christ is a cure for cancer. It is called the blood of the Lamb. If we see that we are being independent and doing our own things, then we must confess our sins, and allow Him to restore us. May the Lord deal with this independent spirit within us. And really shows us how we are related to one another. We are not just calling others 'brothers' for the sake of it. It is wonderful to travel around within the body of Christ. You do not have to remember anybody's name. You just call everybody brother and sister. Do not be offended that I just call you brother and sister; it is so precious. But are we saying brothers and sisters from our head or from our heart? Do we really see the relationship that we have been brought into? Praise God. Peter started to get a glimpse of it. And the more we get a glimpse of it, the more we can enter into the reality of it also.

And then we come to chapter 2 where it was the day of Pentecost. What is this chapter most famous for? What is the real focus of this chapter? Is the focus on the gifts? Is the focus on all the noise and the speaking of tongues? It was very important because the Holy Spirit came forth. As Peter testified 'this was that which was spoken of'. But the real focus and testimony of this chapter is the birth of the church. As the Holy Spirit came forth, those one hundred and twenty individuals saw that they were related. When that Spirit came forth, they were no longer a one hundred and twenty individual ones, but they saw that they were born into the oneness of the body of Christ. They were brought together into an oneness with Christ as the head. And this was the testimony we see in chapter 2. Let us start to look at verse 42

and I am going to ask you a question. What is your perspective of these verses when you were reading them? What do you see here when we are reading this? May the Lord speak to us because we are familiar with much of what we are sharing tonight. Sometimes familiarity can be our greatest hindrance in learning things. May this be fresh to us tonight.

As we look at Acts 2: 42 - 47 *'They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer'. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved'*, what do you see? All we see in these verses was the life of the church being expressed. And the key word here is life. It is not church. The key word is the life of the church being expressed. Now the church is vital but the key word is the life. You see the life of Christ being expressed by these believers. As these ones were together, they started experiencing something that they have not had before. Here it said they were sensing a feeling of awe. And I do not think that it is just an emotional feel good feeling. But they were together and they had this wonderful desire to be there. Who was telling them to do this? They did not have the twenty years of experience of how to meet. They did not have the book of church order to tell them how to act. But there was a life within each one of them and this same life drew them together; this same life gave them the desire to break bread together; this same life gave them the desire to sit at the feet of the disciples to listen to their teachings. And what were the disciples teaching? And what was Peter declaring to them? They were telling them about Christ. 'Let us tell you about this one that we have lived with for three years. He told us something at the beginning that we did not understand. He told us how He had to go into Jerusalem and died and three days be raised again. But now we see the reality of all these. He told us to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Now we see and experience the promise of the Father of the Holy Spirit'. They had this desire to fellowship and to share with one another.

And they were not talking that the 49ers winning this afternoon, but they were sharing Christ with one another. And they were enjoying the goodness of the Lord. So often we say let us get together to fellowship, and then we can have a good time together. But there was only one person missing and it is the Lord. We can fellowship about football; we can fellowship about knitting; and we can fellowship about making cupcakes. I like it when sisters get together and fellowship about cupcakes. But let us be clear when we are talking about fellowship that we are sharing about the life of Christ. And the more they share, all of a sudden, spontaneously, they were praying more. They did not need to have someone

tell them that it is seven o'clock and it is time to pray. You can only pray on Tuesday night or at other places Wednesday night and the rest of the week you do not need to pray. No, they were continuing in that spirit of prayer and there was the life within them that they were all experiencing and expressing together. And how we need to have this experience also. We will have it if we focus on His life; and the more we focus on Christ and His life the more life we get.

The tragic thing is that somehow, sometimes, we can shift from the focus on His life to the focus on the church. Now I want to be careful on how I say this. When we focus on the church all we get is the feel good feeling on the outward expression. We are focused more on the outward, on the traditions and the format of how we look. And all of a sudden we found dissipation and weakness inside. The focus shifted to the outward from the inward reality. But in these verses, we see life leading into more life as it says in verse 46, *'Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple'*. That is the mind of Christ. How they enjoyed this life together. Nobody has given them a course on how to shepherd, because the life of the shepherd was within them, caring for them. And they were responding to that life.

There is one word that we have not mentioned with regard to all this. And it is the word meetings. Now when we talked of church life, what do you think of? Do we first just think of meetings? Thank God that we can meet together. And I want to be at every meeting there is. But it should not be meeting focus and life is not just about meeting. We are in this life twenty-four/seven. This is the life together that He wants us to enjoy. This is the life that was made real to Peter. And this was Peter's testimony. And how was it made real to Peter? How did Peter speak of it later? Look over in 1 Peter chapter 2: 4 - 6 *'And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture:*

"BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED". This prophetic word from Isaiah was made real to Peter. It said we come to Him a living stone. He is precious in the sight of the Lord. It did not say we come to each other. But we come to Him and He is the living stone. And because we have His life within us, we are also living stones and He is that precious corner stone building us together. This is no longer a theory to Peter; seeing this expressed in the Book of Acts. And he testified that Christ is the cornerstone. And we know that the cornerstone sets the standard for the whole set of building. When that cornerstone is set in place, the whole building is built around that. It is so precious. And here is saying He is the cornerstone. And He sets the standard for our life. He is so precious. Praise God we are living stones also. We are sharing in that life together and Peter was encouraging them and bringing in a reminder because they were going through some difficult time in 1 Peter. They could lose sight of the precious calling in their life; this precious calling that they have been called into. May we see the preciousness of what the Lord has done;

that glorious day when the church was born in Jerusalem; how we have been brought into them. What a glorious blessing and privilege we have.

It is tragic within the Christians today. Some are trying to replace the corner stone. We need to be able to hold faithful to that. The Lord is our cornerstone and in other places in the scripture it said He is the plumb line. In this day of relativity, many things try to breathe into us and tell us to go this way, go that way. This is why we need that prophetic word made more sure in our heart. And when these forces come upon us we can say no to them. We can say the cornerstone say this; and we are not going your way. We are going to be faithful to what the Lord has made real to our heart. Would it be made more real to us in our heart.

Let us look back to Acts chapter 5. Acts 5 is one of everybody's favorite chapters. This is the story of Ananias and Sapphira. If you are going to select a meeting of the church in the first century to be at, you probably would not pick this one. Can you imagine sitting in this room and this man Ananias walked into this room. He gave some money from the sale of his land to Peter and Peter said, 'why have you lied to the Holy Spirit? You have not lied to man but you lied to God'. This was because they sold this property at one price and they kept some money for themselves. But when they brought it in to make an offering they said they sold the property and that was everything they got from the sale. Now the sad thing about it was that they could sell the property for anything and they could have kept what they wanted to. If they wanted to give half to the assembly, that was ok. But the issue was they were trying to look good before men. They were trying to give the impression that they had sold and gave everything. Then all of a sudden, Ananias was struck dead. And they took him out to bury him. Then a little while his wife came in and they asked her 'did you sell it for such and such a price'. And she said yes and she died too. It said the church was in fear and trembling. They should be in fear and trembling. We see how jealous the Lord was for this infant church. He desires that there has to be a purity for the church to maintain its purity. And this is a lesson for us; because we think in this age of grace, we can do whatever we want to. We might not see some of this immediate consequences., but what did Peter write to these dear ones and to us? Sometimes it is one of those verses we overlook. If you look back at 1 Peter 4, you see how things are made real to him and he wrote to encourage and strengthen these ones.

One of our favorite verses is 1 Peter 4:17, *'For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?'*

Now judgment is not a popular topic today. How many of us like to hear sermons of judgment? It is not too popular. But brothers and sisters, as the Lord is leading us, we should be one of those living daily in the light of the judgment seat of Christ. One day we will appear there; but it is not related to our salvation. Our salvation is secured. But one day there will be the settling of account. It is not an issue of salvation but an issue of reward. And we need to allow the Lord to deal with us now or deal with us later.

And one of the great lessons we see in Peter's life was that he was one who allowed the Lord to deal with him immediately. He did not put things off. When there was something going on in Peter's life, he allowed the Lord to deal with it in that moment. As the Lord pointed out things in our life, may we let our Lord deal with it and set us from it because eventually it comes back around. We need to see, brothers and sisters, as Peter wrote, it is time for judgment to begin in the house of God. It is tragic today that we are too loose in many ways. We misunderstand grace. And we allow some things to go on within the house of God and weaken the testimony. We are not speaking of man's judgment. We are looking to the Lord to point things out the right way and then it will bring us back in line with the cornerstone; walking His ways, dealing with one another the way He would have us speak out. So we could be those who are prepared for His return. May the Lord touch us with this.

As we move on in the Book of Acts, we see how the Lord touched something very deep within Peter. Peter was one who was very prejudiced. He was a great Jew, and he was brought up in that Jewish heritage. He would not have anything to do with the Gentiles. But we know what is upon the Lord's heart. And it is that His church is to be a church for all people. But first the Lord had to deal with Peter. So in Acts chapters 10 and 11, we have the story of Cornelius and Peter. And Cornelius was a Gentile who was living in Caesarea. He was a devout man who feared the Lord. As he was praying one day, he was told to go to Joppa to get Peter and that Peter would go and speak to him. And so the next day he sent some of his men to get Peter. Peter was in the city of Joppa and he was up on the rooftop praying. He was hungry. And all of a sudden he had this vision. And he saw this sheet coming down out of heaven and in this sheet there were all sorts of animals that were unclean and unkosher. And he heard this voice said, 'arise Peter, kill and eat'. Peter being a good Jew said 'I have never eaten anything unclean'. That was an amazing testimony. He had never eaten anything unclean and that showed His dedication. In Acts 10:15, it says he heard this voice. And it said 'what God has cleansed, should no longer be considered as unholy'. And this happened three times. And after he had this vision, these men from Cornelius arrived and Peter said 'I am the man you are looking for'. And they headed on back to Caesarea. It is wonderful how Cornelius had such a desire for the Lord. And the Lord sent Peter there. Peter told Cornelius how difficult it was for him to be there. He said in verse 28 *'And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean'*. Peter started sharing the word with them. In verse 34, it says *'Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality'*. Peter was starting to see something. And then in the midst of the sermon, we know the Holy Spirit came down and these Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as the Jews did on Pentecost. And Peter saw what happened. He saw how they had been saved as the Jews

were saved. He said yes you could be baptized. Peter here saw the oneness of the body of Christ. What a precious testimony this was.

And we know as the Book of Acts continues on, all of a sudden there started something called Judaism. The Judaists started telling the Gentiles, unless you were circumcised you were not saved. So this was becoming such a crisis among the early church that they had a counsel together in Jerusalem. And we turn over to Acts chapter 15 where we see that they had this counsel together. And then Peter stood up and testified. In verse 9, it says *'and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith'*. And then he made an amazing statement in verse 11. He said *'But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are'*. Look at the high road that Peter took here. He was there among the Jews. He did not say they were saved like us. He said no, by the grace of God we were saved like them. He was actually elevating them. He said we were saved like them. We were saved through that grace in the same way as they were saved. How precious it was the way he humbled himself. He was seeing this reality.

It was a wonderful testimony of the oneness of the body of Christ. And how did Peter convey to these dear ones when he wrote the first epistle? Turn back over to 1 Peter 2: 9 – 10. It says, *'But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY'*. It was a wonderful testimony of the oneness of the body of Christ and Peter saw the reality of it here. He was writing to these ones who were dispersed, some were Jewish by background and some were Gentiles. There was no distinction now. He testified and said you were. How precious here he said you were and not you would be. This was something that they had brought into the reality. When we are born again, brothers and sisters, we are a part of the church, we are part of the body of Christ and these are things that are describing us. It says you are a chosen race. I am sorry to disappoint many of you. The Chinese are not the chosen race. The Lord has someone else as the chosen race. But we see here how in the phrase of the chosen race, Peter chose all of these words so precisely. If you look at the Old Testament, at one time, the Jews were the chosen race. Now He said no, all of these who were born of God, born of Christ, they were the chosen race. Selected of Him, born of Him; you are a royal priesthood. You are priests to express His character. You are priests to express and reveal the kingly character of our Lord. You are a holy nation; one that is set apart and sanctified for him. We are called to be that holy nation and to be set apart. And we are no longer our own possession but we are God's possession.

The reality of this captured Peter as he experienced this in his life. And we see there is a purpose here. It says the Lord has brought us into this so we can proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called us out

of darkness into His marvelous light. Are we the people of God who are proclaiming the excellencies of God? Throughout the Book of Acts, we see that the early church proclaimed the excellencies of Him. They were not proclaiming the excellencies of themselves. They were not proclaiming the excellencies of the assembly. They were proclaiming the excellencies of Him who had called them out of their darkness into His marvelous light. Brothers and sisters, do we see the freshness and fullness in our heart? And do we ever have this revelation? Has it become dull? As Peter was writing, he was stirring this up among us. Will we be awakened to it? One of the great blessings that we have in this assembly is that we have so much teaching on the purpose of God. We can become so familiar with it that the preciousness of it is lost in us. It will just become some phrases that we use to impress people. Oh, the Lord is calling us into this life. There is so much more that He wants us to express. There is a principle throughout the New Testament and I call it the principle of the much more. Sometimes we get into something and we think we have arrived. In Thessalonians, Paul commended the Thessalonians on their love for one another. He said you learned how to love one another; you expressed that love for one another. But I encourage you to excel still more. As we go through this life, the Lord wants us to excel still more and know more and more of Him. There is still so much that we can learn of Him, so much more to experience of Him and the vastness of His riches.

Anytime when we talk on this matter of the church, the glorious church, we just touch the tip of the iceberg. We have to ask our heart; how do we know that the reality of the church is really working in our hearts? And is this just a teaching, a concept or is this becoming more real to us? There is a little test we can take. When we start talking about the church, if it puffs us up, if it starts making us proud, if we start thinking that because we have something of the teaching of the church that we are better than others and if we start looking upon the ones who do not see the church, it is only in our head. And that is dividing and separating. Once we really see something that is in God's heart for the assemblies, it humbles us. It is by the mercy of God that we see. It is said there in 1 Peter 2: 10 *'for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY'*. This is the mercy that comes in. When the Lord revealed to David He was going to build a temple, what was David's response? David fell down and said who am I? It humbled David. When it was told Solomon, he said who am I? Who are we, brothers and sisters, that the Lord will entrust His treasure to us? But it is not really us. It is Christ in us. We have the life within us that desires to express in a fuller way. There is a life within us that desires to explode and be set free. We, through our customs and traditions, hinder that life. The reality of the church will revolutionize our lives; not just one time but every day.

May the Lord bring and restore the freshness and the reality of the glorious church in us. The freshness and the reality of what we have been brought into. This reality helped Peter his whole life. As he was

writing these letters before he was being martyred, what was he bringing to their remembrance? He was reminding them of this preciousness of the church. How we have been brought unto that living stone, brought unto that choicest precious stone. How our Lord desires His life to be expressed through us. And Peter knew it was difficult and that was why he concluded his first epistle with verses 5:10 - 11 *'After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen'*. Brethren, as we follow the Lord in this hour, we allow the Lord to build us together to be that testimony unto Him. We are going to suffer for a little while and it is this suffering that leads us to life. It is not the suffering that leads to death, but it is a suffering that leads to life. Because as we look at our lord, He suffered, He went to death but there was a resurrection, there was a life that came forth. God is jealous that life be expressed in His people today. And I pray that in this hour we are these people cooperating with Him and loving Him. May He grant us this grace. Maybe He already gave us this grace. I got a bad temper. I have a bad habit of asking for things He already given. I said Lord, please give me grace. He said Mac, I already gave you grace; I gave you my Son, He is full of grace and truth. It is not a matter of Him giving us grace, it is whether we are responding to His grace and allowing this life to lead us into the fullness in His heart.

Let us pray.

Lord, when we do stop and get a glimpse of the glory of Your church, we do respond with who are we that we could see such a glorious blessing. Lord, as we present ourselves to You tonight, we have a desire that not I but Christ. Lord, we are really tired of living for ourselves. We do want to live for You. You love us and died for us. We are thankful for the life within us. We pray we will grant that life the freedom to work within us; to build us together, to strengthen us in You and to hasten Your return. In Thy name we pray. Amen.