

2 Peter 1: 16 – 19 *For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 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.*

We know in these verses Peter was testifying of his experience in that Mount of transfiguration. So let us turn back to the book of Matthew 16:28 and look at that experience. We know that earlier in the chapter that Peter had seen and received the revelation of Christ and His church. Later on he received the revelation of the cross. And after the Lord concluded that, He continued on, in chapter 16:28 “*Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*”

Then we go on to 17: 1 – 8 *‘Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid”. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone’.*

Let us pray.

Lord, we are thankful that our testimony is that Jesus only. Lord we find many things tucked in our hearts. Lord, we want to be those who return and allow You to be our all in all in our life. Lord, as we gathered here tonight, we do not want to be occupied with other things. Lord, we want You to be all in all in speaking, translating and hearing. Lord we will be jealous for the fullness of Your life tonight. We do not want to be distracted by those around us. We do not want to be distracted by New Year’s eve. There are many things that can turn our hearts one way or the other. But tonight we like to be those who turn our eyes onto Jesus only. Because we know in Jesus every provision has been made for life and

godliness. Lord, by faith we lay hold of that provision tonight. And we want in our heart to behold You in a fresh and new way. O Lord, do pour Your spirit upon us and under that anointing we will behold You in a greater and fuller way. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

During our time together we have been considering a little phrase that Peter used in his epistle. Peter testified how that prophetic word has been made more sure within him. And what Peter was saying was the word that he had heard during the Lord's ministry and in his own growing up and through his life experiences this had become reality to him. They were no longer just a concept, just a teaching, just a doctrine. They had become life to him, impacting and directing him day by day. And as Peter knew that he would be martyred soon, he was writing to those ones who were dear to him, to stir them up by way of a reminder that they too could continue on strong in the Lord. He wanted to make sure that they had not settled down; that they had not fallen asleep and that they had not just followed traditions and routines; that they would allow the life of the Lord to lead them to continue on into fullness and that the word may be made real and strong within them too.

This is the burden we have in our own hearts. As we said in the past years, we have been so blessed to hear so many wonderful teachings. But how much of what we have heard has become reality in our hearts? If we are honest, we confess that it is very little. So we are thankful that we are still called today and we have an opportunity to allow that word to become real within us. We need to make the most of the opportunity that we have. We know the days are short. Our Lord is returning soon. We want to be those who are ready for His glorious return.

We have already shared how these words have been made real within Peter's individual life. Last night we looked at this matter of how it was made real in Peter with regards to the church. And it is interesting that as we look at Peter's individual life, as we look at Peter's church life, it is one life and it is the life of Christ. When we speak of Peter's individual life, what is that life? It is the life of Christ being expressed. When we speak of church life, what are we speaking of? We are speaking of the life of Christ expressed through His people. Tonight as we come to consider this matter of the kingdom, and as we touch on the kingdom life, whose life are we talking about? It is the life of the King being expressed among His people. It is all the same life. It is one life that we are living. And we are only distinguishing them this time for the sake of fellowship and encouragement. And would the Lord use this within our lives to really strengthen us in these days.

As we look at Peter again tonight, how did the reality of this beautiful picture he saw on the Mount of the Transfiguration become real to him? And may the reality of the kingdom life become real to us. As we said over and over again, there are so many teachings about the kingdom. But we want to go beyond that. We want it to be in our hearts. We want that prophetic word made more sure in our heart. We want to

be taking heed in our hearts and when the morning star rises in our hearts, we will behold Him in all His glory.

Now when we are talking about His kingdom what are we speaking of? I would like to keep this very simple because you can have conference upon conference of the kingdom. But we want to try to keep it as simple as we can because our focus is not so much on the kingdom as on kingdom life. What is the reality of the living in that kingdom? So what is the kingdom? What do you think of when you think about the kingdom? Do you think of the time? You think of events. Well in a very simple way, the kingdom is a person. The kingdom is our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is the King and where He is, there is the kingdom. He is the King of kings. He is the kingdom. When we speak about having a kingdom life, it is the life within us. When our Lord was upon this earth, it says the kingdom of God is drawn nigh because the kingdom is right there in the person. Kingdom is not a thing. It is a person, the reality within our Lord. Just like the church is not a thing. The church is a living expression of our Lord. The church is the body of Christ. The kingdom is Him, His life. So on one hand, we say the kingdom is Him. But as far as we are concerned, it is whenever we put ourselves under the authority of the King, under His ruler ship; and His life is expressed through us, there is the kingdom.

I know for many years Dana has been coming here on New Year's time, and he has a wonderful way of describing the kingdom. The way Dana described the kingdom, some of you may have heard it, is that Jesus is the king and we are the dummies. He is the king and we are pretty dumb. But when we come unto Him, His life can be expressed through us. And also in a very general way, when we are speaking of the church, we are speaking more of the life of Christ. When we are speaking of the kingdom, we are speaking more of His authority. He is the King; He is the sovereign rule over our lives and over everything. Now another question we can ask to clarify the matter of the kingdom is: how many kingdoms are there? Is there a kingdom future, is there a kingdom now? No, it is one eternal kingdom. The kingdom of God is just one eternal kingdom. We can experience it now but then it will be fully manifested in the future. It is all one kingdom. There are different facets and we are not going to get into all the different aspects of it. But the kingdom of God is one. It is an eternal kingdom and we want to be those who are partaking in it. Praise God even though there is that full manifestation of the kingdom in the future, we can experience the goodness of the kingdom now. How do we experience the goodness of the kingdom now? It is when we submit ourselves to the King. We allow His life to work within us. We allow His life and character to form within us. We experience the kingdom now because we are experiencing the person of the kingdom now.

Let us go back and look at this Mount of Transfiguration. We see how the story was presented in Matthew, Mark and Luke. We will just look at it in Matthew. But if you can go back to that Mount in time, can you really imagine the magnificence of what occurred that day? The Lord said to these three

disciples, come with me. And they were there on that mount and all of a sudden our Lord was transfigured. It is interesting when you look at the different ways the gospel describes it. Each one is trying to describe the magnificence of it. But there is a glory, brilliance and a radiance that words cannot describe because it is the full glory of God being manifested. We see the glory of the Son of Man coming in the kingdom. And we know how Peter responded. He was really pretty impetuous. 'Lord, let me make you three tents'. We see Peter responding in himself. But we see how, as we look at Peter's life tonight that character worked within him.

Now we really are not here tonight to discuss the teachings that occurred at the transfiguration because we are focusing more on Peter's life; on how Peter experienced what he had been told on the mount, that in a few days, he would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. He saw in parts; he saw in glimpse. And the more he followed the Lord, the more he responded to the Lord, the more the reality of that kingdom became real within him. We see this process in Peter. And to me it is so encouraging because he was so willing to go through the process. He was not changed all of a sudden from this rough fisherman to this saint. It is through the dealings of the Lord and the dealings of the cross that Peter was transformed.

And that is so throughout much of our own life. We are discouraged at times that we are not making much progress. But so often we are judging it with our own standard. We are judging it with our natural eye. We do not know what the Lord is doing. It can be really frustrating at times when we continue to follow Him. And as He takes us through this process, sometimes it seems we make 10 miles of progress in one day, and then something happens in our life and we feel we go 5 miles backwards. And then we come up to an event and we mess it up and we kind of circle around again. We are like NASCAR drivers. In NASCAR you just go around the track and sometimes we can feel our Christian life is like that. It is a whole life of left hand turns. You just go around and around. And we feel we are not getting anywhere. However, all of a sudden, we realize we made a little progress. Praise God that the Lord is working in us in so many wonderful ways. But the accuser of the brother is always there. He is telling us how worthless we are. But we have the life of the King within us. The wonderful thing about the life of the King is that He has already overcome. Sometimes we do not know what the Lord has done within us. And then we will find ourselves in a situation and all of a sudden something comes out of our mouth that is really encouraging to our brothers, and we say, wow I did not know I have that in me; where did that come from? It comes from the daily morning times with His word. Oftentimes we are in His word every morning and we feel we are not making any progress; we feel we are thinking more of that next cup of coffee than we are about the word of God. We are fighting to stay awake. But we put that word in our heart and we allow it to stay there. And at the time when the Holy Spirit needs it, all of a sudden, to our surprise that word comes forth. We have already spoken about Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Of all the people there, I think the most surprised at Peter's sermon was Peter. After he gave that sermon, he would sit down and said where that came from. He said I did not know it was there. It had been implanted within him by his yielding to the Holy Spirit. The Lord used it in a marvelous way. Praise God when we are surprised what the Lord has done within us. And we see more and more of that reality of how we walk by faith and not by sight. We are not walking and judging our spiritual progress. But we are just responding to the way He leads us through faith. And as He leads us through various trails, by faith we continue on. And this is Peter's testimony in 2 Peter where he talks about life precious faith. This is the faith that he has received.

We are back on this mount. It is interesting as you look at the situation on the mount. There is one thing that was not mentioned. The enemy was not mentioned there. All of Peter's actions were just by himself. When the Lord God spoke and rebuked Peter, it was not because of the action of the enemy, it was his own self. He took that initiative himself and he said let us make three tents. That was not the Lord. That was Peter's self life. And this is the greatest challenge in this matter of our life together. So often we give too much credit to the enemy. The enemy is out there and he is very real. But if we are always in Christ, he cannot touch us. But oftentimes, we take things into our own hands. We found out the number one enemy in our life is ourselves. He is our greatest challenge and through this Christian life, some describe it as a civil war. There is this fight going on within us when we are saying no to ourselves and yes to Christ. But sometimes we say yes to self and we make a mess of things. But thank God, even in those situations we can learn from the Lord. 'Lord, as I say yes to myself back then I want to learn of you not to do that again'. And the Lord will continue to teach us. As we said, the greatest mistake we made in this Christian life is not learning from our mistakes. But if we keep a teachable heart and a teachable spirit, the Lord can continue to work within us.

And also if you look at Peter's action on this Mount of transfiguration, it is also that Peter was not distracted by bad things, but was distracted by things that were good. We spoke the other evening how Peter was distracted by the apostle John. Who was Peter distracted by now? They were Moses and Elijah. These were pretty good people. But we do not compare them to Jesus. Peter got confused. The Lord used this to teach Peter. It is interesting if you look at Peter's first words. He said, 'Lord. it is good for us to be here'. In one way it was good because they were supposed to be there. But Peter was looking at it from the wrong perspective. He was looking at it from his own selfish perspective. 'It was good for me to be here, good for me. This was great and I was here with the Lord and Moses and Elijah'. This was really great and he was missing the whole purpose of why he was there. His self-centeredness was blinding him of why the Lord wanted him to be there. The Lord wanted him to be there to show him the kingdom. He could be there quietly and listened to the Lord and Moses and Elijah talking about the Lord's departure. Peter was there to see the kingdom as a person and His sovereign rule over the earth.

But it is our natural tendency when we receive the blessing of the Lord, to think how good they are for us. And we forget the purpose of the blessing. The Lord has blessed us so richly with His life. But why are we there to receive that life? It is so that the life can flow out to others. The life can be used to build the church. The life can be used to testify of the kingdom. The life can be used to testify to the world and draw many unto Him. Yes, there is an aspect of this life for us but we are not the end. We are just the vessel for the life to flow through. And this is what the Lord was trying to show Peter. And Peter was so self centered that he was just seeing it for himself. Whenever we receive the blessing of the Lord, brothers and sisters, we need to be thankful to Him for those blessings. I will take every blessing that He gives me. But then we need to ask this question, what is the purpose of this blessing? How do You want us to use it within the kingdom? How do You want us to use it in our lives so You can receive more glory and honor? When we receive from the Lord, we also respond so we may not be those who just receive. If we just receive and we never release life, we will be like the dead sea that our brother spoke of this morning. Why? Water flows into that sea but there is no outlet. So it just dies.

It is tragic in history that in the age we live in, even though the Lord has poured out His life so abundantly upon us, yet we have just become receptacle of death and not vessels of life. This is what the Lord was showing Peter, that he could be a vessel of life fit for the master's service. So Peter in his self centeredness saw how it was good to be there. And then what did Peter say? He said 'let us make three tents'. Again this was just Peter taking his self initiative. And what was the tent for? A tent is something to take to settle down and stay. Again Peter in his selfishness said, 'Lord this is so great. I do not want this to end. We are just going to build three tents and we can stay here forever. We have arrived. This is the ultimate. And we are going to stay right here and enjoy the blessing. We are so blessed, so why would we leave the mountain? We are going to settle right there'.

But what does the Lord call us to? Did he call us to be settlers? He calls us to be pilgrims and sojourners. This was one of the words that Peter got settled in his heart. When he wrote those two epistles, how did he address the saints? He did not address them as settlers. He addressed them as pilgrims and sojourners. So often we can have a blessing from the Lord, whether it is from conference or from a local assembly and we see it as this is it. We are going to settle right here. We have seen it, and we have seen everything. This is how the Lord wants it and we are going to stay right here. But the Lord is saying no, I want you to press on. There is so much more. This is the much more principle again. I do not know how many of you camp. But what happens to the air inside the tent after you put that tent there and you let the tent stay there for a long time? It gets pretty stale. That air can get pretty stale especially in the hot sun. And all of a sudden, the tent starts to smell. It is sad today, brothers and sisters, how many stale and smelly Christians we have. We just settled down and we are not allowing the freshness of His life to come in. So we sit there and we smell and get all stinky in self. You know, we are supposed to have a

smell in us but it is the fragrance of Christ; the fragrance of His life which is fresh every day. But tragically we always carry that fragrance of self. You touch someone what do you smell? You just smell self. You touch someone else; you smell that fragrance of Christ. And this was what the Lord was trying to get through to Peter.

This was why all of a sudden God intervened. It was because Peter was getting his eyes off of the reality of what was going on. Peter said let us made three tents. Again Peter had good intentions. He wanted to make one for the Lord, one for Moses and one for Elijah. But what Peter was doing was treating them as equal. Or Peter was elevating man up to the lord's level; or bringing the Lord down to their level. Now we should honor Moses and Elijah. We are thankful for them. But we do not honor them in the same way we honor our Lord. But Peter was bringing them to the same level of honor.

But do not we end up doing this? It is sad how among the people of God, we can elevate certain man. We put them in the wrong place. Now we will never say that with our mouth because we know better. But our actions are in line with elevating one. We go to a bible study and if you use certain people's name, brother so and so said this, everybody has to be quiet because they cannot question it. It seems like you now play the trump card and they cannot say anything else. If you say brother so and so said this, then it does not matter what the bible said. We got to listen to this. We can joke or chuckle about this but sometimes this is true. How we like to rub shoulder with the big names. And we love to drop names so casually. I go back east now and I say we were in San Francisco, I was with brother so and so. And the others will say 'Oh'. We just drop those names. And we do it in our selfish humble way. But we are proud within ourselves. We need to really see there is a place of honoring one another, but we do not want to lift them up too high.

I had an experience one time at a conference. We were invited to go to a conference and did not know a lot of brothers or sisters there. I was invited to be one of the speakers there. We showed up at the conference and we had our bags with us. We were looking around as to where to register and we saw one line there with the letter 'G'. When we got up to the front, it turned out to be the wrong one and people said just go over there. Finally we got to the front of the line where we were supposed to be and they said they did not have our names on the list. They asked me whether I registered. And I told them I did not register. And they said, 'we are full, you cannot come'. I said I was invited to speak. They asked my name and I said I am Mac Graham. And they said, 'Oh, you are Mac Graham'. It seemed like the whole world changed. Somebody grabbed my bags and they were so politely escorting me here and there. But I have not changed. I was the same person. But they were treating one person one way and another person another way. Now do not misunderstand. We should respect the ones who are serving the Lord. But we need to respect one another and not allow this favoritism to come in.

Peter was caught up with that. But it is wonderful to see how reality worked in Peter's life. When you read of this account in 2 Peter 1: 18, Peter said 'and we were with Him'. He did not say we were with them. There were no more Moses and Elijah. He just remembered being with the Lord. How wonderful and precious that was. We are thankful for this opportunity. We want the Lord to expose things in our life where we have the prejudices, where we have those things. Praise God; let the Lord deal with it so that we can allow Him to transform us into His life. As we said Peter was distracted by Moses and Elijah. If you think about Moses, he was the one who was the giver and teacher of the law. But it is sad, brothers and sisters; even today we can allow the teachings of the Lord to distract us from the Lord Himself. We can become focused on the teachings. All of a sudden we can follow that teaching of holiness. And what happens is that we get our eyes off the holy one. We end up focusing on the outward holiness. We touch on this a little bit when we talked about the church. We can focus on the teachings of the church and we can miss the holy life of the church. We can do the same thing with the kingdom. We can focus on all the teachings of the kingdom, and we can miss the very person of the King. Now we are thankful for all the teachings we have and we want to receive every one of those. But we want to capture it in the right perspective. What are all the teachings and all the scriptures for? They are there to show us Christ. They are there to lead us to Him. Throughout the scripture everything focuses on Christ and what is upon His heart and His desire. We need to allow that fullness to work in us. That is why later on in 2 Peter 3: 11, he wrote, '*what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness*'. It is not that Peter was calling us to focus upon the knowledge of all the end time teachings, but to have that holiness, that life and character of our Lord formed within us. That will hasten His return.

Now if we think of Elijah, we know he did all those miracles. Some of us today we can be distracted by the experiences and miracles of things that are going on. We have a certain experience and we say God must act this way. Praise God that throughout the gospel we see our Lord healing different ones. And I am so thankful that He did not just pick one way to heal everybody. There was a great variety of ways where He manifested His power. Our Lord does not work in a box. Last night we spoke of how our Lord broke one of Peter's little boxes; that box in relation to the Gentiles. It got totally shattered. And Peter saw how the Lord wants His church to be built with all the Jews and Gentiles together, a chosen race. We can end up focusing upon certain experiences. Elijah was a prophet and we can focus so much on prophecies. We need to study the prophecies and allow them to be teaching us and preparing us. They are in the scripture for a purpose. But sometime we can use it in a wrong way for our own inquisitive knowledge. What are all the prophecies for? They are to prepare the way for the Lord. They speak forth God's heart of what is happening now and what is going to happen in the future. Again they are showing our Lord.

We were in Brazil in the month of October and November. And we actually ran into a little problem related to this. There was a brother going around in various assemblies, and his whole focus was on who is the anti-Christ. And he was having message after message on who is this anti-Christ and you can trace through here and there. And he was identifying who this anti-Christ is. And we were getting many questions on who is this anti-Christ. And they asked who did brother Kaung said anti-Christ is; because whoever anti-Christ that Brother Kaung said is, then that is it. That is why he will never say. So we have to turn the whole question around. Brothers and sisters, who are we looking for? Yes, we have to be familiar with the things related with the anti-Christ, but are we looking for the anti-Christ?

No, we are looking for Christ. Our eyes are on him. When we read through the Book of Revelation, we do not want to be distracted by the dragon and all of those stuffs; we want to keep our eyes upon that Lamb. We behold Him and this is how we behold him these days; we keep our eyes upon our Lord. And we, in simplicity follow Him. As we see Him, we see what is not of Him. As we see Christ, we see this one is not Christ. We do not go around trying to figure this out. We keep our eyes upon Him. Thank the Lord, Peter was learning these things. And finally Peter had had his say and while he was still speaking, God the Father intervened. He said Peter, I had enough of you. He said 'this is my beloved Son, listen to Him. Would the Holy Spirit help us grasp the tremendous statement that our Father made. This voice that overshadowed; bright cloud of glory that showed kind of the glory of the Lord, sent forth this testimony, *'this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'*. Listen to Him. You be quiet. Give constant listening to Him. It is not just listening one time. But it is constancy here. It is having our ears tuned to Him and Him alone. Do we know how jealous God is that we listen to His Son? Our God the Father is exceedingly jealous that His Son has this pre-eminence. And He wants us to be listening to Him. This is one of the keys to the kingdom. In Matthew 16: 19, Jesus said to Peter, I am giving you the keys to the kingdom. And this is one of those keys; learning to listen and obey our Lord; learning to listen and hear Him only. This is one of the keys to the kingdom.

Again sometimes we think these keys are so complicated. But keys are pretty simple devices. You put it in and turn except for the cars nowadays. Men made things complicated. I got a car the other day that does not need a key. You do not need to stick anything in there. The key can be in the pocket and the car just starts.

Praise God, He is simple. He said this is one of the keys to the kingdom that I am giving you. Learn to listen to my Son and Him only. And respond to His voice. Praise God for the simplicity. And we are thankful that Peter learned to respond. For we see in 2 Peter his wonderful testimony of how the Lord worked in his life. Let turn over to 2 Peter 1: 1 – 11 *'Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our*

Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

If you look at verse 3 there, it is an amazing statement. It said, seeing His divine power granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness. Do we believe that? Now we all say yes. We had a brother come through Richmond last month, and the title of his message is ‘Do you believe what you believe’? We say we believe a lot of things. But do our lives reflect we really believe it? When we found ourselves in a difficult circumstance, do we really believe this verse, ‘*by His divine power, He has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness*’. What a powerful statement; the provision of the life of Christ that we receive.

It continues ‘*through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence*’. And then it continues, getting greater and greater ‘*For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust*. He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises. Sometimes when we read these verses, we think these are just fairy tales. But Peter was testifying to the reality of it. He was experiencing this in his life. And through this we become partakers of His divine nature. We share in the kingly character in the life of our Lord. And praise God, He has taken us out of this kingdom of darkness and brought us out into the kingdom of His beloved Son. And he continued ‘*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love*’. We take this faith that we have received and we diligently respond to Him. And His character formed within us. And we see more of His magnificent promises. He said ‘*For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having*

forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. Praise God; as we respond to God and His way of training us, there is an increase of His wonderful life in us. And then we have this marvelous promise at the end. It says we have a wonderful entrance into His kingdom. It did not say we barely make it in. But in Christ, it is abundantly supplied to us. Now as we look at verses 5 – 7, we see that these characters, these qualities that Peter was talking of are progressive. There is a relationship there. Thank the Lord, He has given us this life precious faith. And using this faith we respond to Him. And this was Peter's wonderful, personal testimony. We can see in his life how it has worked out within him. Now to help us see this, we have some overheads and we will walk through these.

Basically we have two columns. We have Simon and Peter. Simon refers to the natural man. And Peter refers to the other one that the Lord has worked and transformed into. Simon was that man in flesh and was living in himself. And we see how as Peter responded to the training of the Lord, he allowed this life of the King to be worked within him and he became the partakers of the divine nature.

Peter said as we respond in faith, we have moral excellence or virtues depending on the translation. And this is actually courage. It is a military term of valor. And we see this picture within Peter's life because we see the contrast. If you look at Matthew 26, this is where Peter was denying the Lord. This is where the little slave girl came up to him. Now a little slave girl was the lowest of the lowest society that could be. She was not like a person of authority. She came up and asked Peter, are you one of them? And Peter said no. Later on another slave girl asked the same thing. Peter denied it and then it said there was one standing around and he asked Peter, and Peter, in his own self he just crumbled and denied the Lord. But praise God, in the second chapter in Acts, on the day of Pentecost, there were thousands and thousands of Jews gathered in the city that day, and all of a sudden, this Holy Spirit was poured forth and all of these were speaking in tongues. And it talks about how the city was bewildered, and in verse 13, it talks about how they were actually mocking them. And here was Peter, where a little while ago he crumbled in front of a slave girl, but the character of the King strengthened him and allowed him to testify that this was that while the whole city was in an uproar and they were mocking him. We see this character changed within Peter. It was no longer I but Christ. It was not his own self. This had been made real in Peter and he was able to stand there, strengthened in the power of the Lord and testified. What a marvelous transition we see here.

I want to take you further. Not that you would just be the man of virtue, but with that virtue you have knowledge because if you have courage without knowledge, it will just be foolish zeal. And we see this in Peter's life. There were times in his life that he did not have that knowledge, he did not have that

understanding of God's purpose. Again we spoke of it in Matthew 16. After Peter had testified Thou are the Christ, we see how the Lord told Peter that he had to go to the cross. And Peter tried to stop the Lord. What did the Lord say to Peter? Peter, you are not setting your mind on God's interest but on man's interest. You are setting your purpose on man's purpose. He did not have the understanding of what God's heart and God's purpose were. It is similar to what we have talked about in the Mount of transfiguration. Peter said good for us to be here. There was nothing in his mind of God's purpose. It was self-centered Simon, all is for him. But praise God. We see how God took and worked within Peter. And we have already spoken last night of the great transformation that the Lord did in Peter's life in the house of Cornelius. How Peter was able to see that God is not partial because now Peter understood God's heart, with the knowledge that came in and it was made real to him. It became a reality. We see this contrast and we are encouraged to see the work the Lord did within his life.

But he also had this strength and knowledge and virtue, and he also was encouraged to go and testify under self-control. I never like the word self-control. To me it should be spirit control. It is not really the self controlling it. But it is a controlled self. Now Peter had come to this place, because we know how impulsive Peter was. In Matthew 17: 24 is a story of Peter challenged with the tribute money. This story is after the Mount of transfiguration. Those who collected the tax came up to Peter and said does your teacher pay the tax? And Peter in himself said, yes and then he went and talked to the Lord. The Lord sent him fishing and he caught a fish with a stater in the mouth and he paid the tax. We see Peter did not have any self-control there. And we remember how in the garden of Gethsemane, how when they came to arrest the Lord, who was it that had the sword? He cut off that ear and John 18 said that was Peter. But thank the Lord that the Lord healed that ear. We see within Peter that he was so impetuous, without self-control that whatever he thought he went ahead and do it. But praise God, we see how the Lord worked within him in a marvelous way. And Peter responded to the Lord. Peter went through these events. Peter displayed one of the greatest characters and that was Peter was teachable. With regard to Peter asking the Lord about paying the taxes, most people say when Peter went out to catch that fish, he probably spent a long time there. Peter probably had to sit there all day. And he probably finally caught one fish. We simply see how Peter learned from that. We see that he went through various things and he learned.

And how we need to learn from our experiences. Later on Peter and Paul had a confrontation in the Book of Galatians chapter 2. Now we see they were in Antioch. And Peter was starting to separate himself from the Gentile believers and would eat only with the Jewish believers. Paul was there and he confronted Peter. Verses 11 – 14 say, *'But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the*

circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" Paul got right up at Peter's face and said you were being a hypocrite; you were leading these people astray. What would old Peter have done? If he still had his sword, he would cut Paul's ear off. If he did not have the sword, he would just deck him. But now we see Peter was correctible. And later on in 2 Peter when he was writing, how did he refer to Paul? He said, my beloved brother Paul. This Paul was one who had got up to Peter's face in public, who did not pull him to the side and quietly correct him, who got into his face before everybody and totally embarrassed him. But Peter learned from it. And his testimony was my beloved brother Paul. He did not hold a grudge. He appreciated what Paul did.

When we are corrected do we call the person that corrects us our beloved brother? We probably put a few other adjectives in there. But we see how the Lord worked in Peter. What a great transforming work. And as Christ continued to do this work, not only having virtue, knowledge and self-control, but then through the self-control, it brought about an endurance within Peter. Now this word endurance is not just gritting your teeth and bearing under it but it is remaining under it in a spirit of calmness and peacefulness; remaining and allowing the Lord to keep you there. From all the stories of Peter in the gospel, he did not have much endurance. If you read the story when the Lord went to Gethsemane, the Lord told him to watch and pray. How much endurance did Peter have? The Lord went and prayed and Peter fell asleep. He woke them up, went back and prayed and Peter fell asleep again. He did not have that endurance. But praise God as the Lord worked within him, we see the Lord creating this wonderful spirit of endurance. We know in the Book of Acts, Peter was arrested a couple of times. Look at Acts 5: 40; it talks about how they were arrested and were beaten, and then look at Peter's testimony in verse 41. It says *'So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name'*. They went out rejoicing that they had endured that ill treatment. And we know later on in Acts 12, Peter was arrested again. We see a beautiful picture of Peter enduring. The situation here was that one of the other apostles, James was arrested and killed. Herod saw how much that pleased everyone. So he arrested Peter and put him in jail. Now Peter knew he was in jail awaiting execution. And what did Peter do in there? It was a wonderful picture. First of all, it was beautiful in verse 5; prayers were made consistently by the church. And as the people were praying, what was Peter doing there? In verse 6 it says *'On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison'*. Peter was sleeping. Peter had a habit of sleeping because in Gethsemane he went to sleep. And in the record of one of the gospels in the Mount of transfiguration, Peter went to

sleep. Before the Lord worked within him, he went to sleep at the wrong time. But now he is sleeping, restful in the Lord, knowing that he was ready to be martyred. Whatever the circumstance, the Holy Spirit was keeping him. Peter had learned that place of enduring.

When we were going through some situations that we feel that are leading us to place of death, what is one of the first things that leave us? We do not sleep well at night. Would we allow the Lord to really be our peace and rest. This is the character of the kingdom. We are talking about kingdom life. And it knows that the King is in charge. And He has got all things in His hand. He has that sovereign rule and dominion over all things. And Peter was in a place of rest; and that if he was going to be martyred, it would be under God's government. Whatever happens, Peter was resting in him. What a lesson we see in Peter's life here.

And as we see Peter having a spirit of endurance, we see how out of it comes a spirit of godliness. Godliness is the very nature of our Lord. In the past, Peter looked at everything from his own self. He was not trying to look at it from God's point. If you look at Matthew 19, there was the story of a rich young ruler. And we know that how hard it was for that ruler to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And then Peter in verse 27 said, *'then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"'* And the Lord in His graciousness told Peter what was there for him. There is the great reward. Peter at this point still was thinking of his own self. But praise God, we see how the Lord has worked in him. Go back to acts 11; we see how Peter was not going to be in God's way because after the wonderful work that the Lord did in the house of Cornelius, Peter was there focusing on the Lord. Verse 17 says, *'Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?'* Before, Peter was standing in God's way quite often, and oftentimes we stand in God's way. God wants to work through us and we hinder that. But praise God, Peter learned to decrease; Peter learned to say it is not I but Christ. And the character of the King was able to come forward in a strong way in Peter.

And out of that godliness came the brotherly kindness. We see this character being developed in Peter. Now in this matter of brotherly kindness, it is the word Philadelphia; love your brother. When we see Simon in the gospel, we see how in Matthew 18, he was trying to be so spiritual. He said, Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother? What was actually happening there? Peter in fact was saying, Lord, my brother has sinned against me so many times. How many times should I forgive him? He was actually uncovering his brother's sins. To me it is kind of ironic, because between Peter and Andrew, who do you think have to forgive the other more? I feel that Andrew had always to forgive Peter. Peter only now and then had to forgive Andrew. He uncovered his brother to the Lord. Praise God. Later on Peter wrote, love can cover a multitude of sins. Love covers. We cloak in spirituality but sometimes we love to uncover the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters. When we see something in our brother and

sister, we can pray for them. Love covers that. We are not to broadcast it everywhere. We can pray and allow the Lord to work. And we see how the Lord had worked in Peter. In a verse in Luke 22, the Lord said, Peter after you have been restored, strengthen your brothers. And we see how he went and strengthened them in the Book of Acts and throughout his writings. What a wonderful strength and encouragement he was to them.

When the character and the divine nature of the Lord form within us, it does not just stop at the brotherly kindness but goes on the character of love, which is agape love, which is not of us. Peter was able to testify it in John chapter 21. Do you love me? Do you have that agape love for me? Peter knew and said at that time, Lord you know I do not. Praise God; at the end of his life, Peter loved not his life unto death. And he was so captured by the love of the Lord that he would die that martyred death. We see in the few verses here in Peter how that divine nature, that kingly nature was in him.

So we have a question? Are we those that are following Simon? Or are we going to follow Peter? If we are honest, there are some here that want to keep going their own way. The Lord is going to let you go that way. But there are some who want to follow Peter. How many tonight want to follow Simon? How many wants to follow Peter? Who are we to follow? We follow the Lord. We can say, Oh Peter was so wonderful we can follow him. But we see, brothers and sisters, how the Lord as he is calling us he wants us to choose to follow him. Back in 2 Peter chapter 1, it says in verse 10, after Peter presents the testimony of what the Lord has done in his life, *'therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you.'* 'Make certain of his calling and choosing you'. So how do we do this? Is it something we do? No, we are simply responding to His call. We make certain of our calling by choosing him. We need to deny ourselves by taking our cross and following Him. We are saying Lord, we respond to Your call. And we are saying Christ is our life. We choose the King. That way, the very kingdom life can work within us. In that way, the wonderful entrance into the kingdom will be abundantly supplied unto us.

Peter found one of those keys to the reality of entering the kingdom. We just responded to the Lord and allowed the Lord to work within us. As we come to an end, remember that Peter wrote these epistles with a purpose. He wrote to stir up things, to bring things to remembrance, to wake us up. Most of the things that I shared, you have heard before. But may we be more diligent to make certain and more sure His word within our hearts and within our lives. Why is that? It is so that we may be ready for His return when that morning star rises. Our Lord is the morning star. Praise God, one day that morning star will arise. Christ and His kingdom will come. Are we those who will be ready for that? May we really take the opportunities we have because Peter concludes his epistles in 2 Peter 3: 18, again encouraging them and encouraging us *'but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen'*.

As we come to the close of 2012, may we have this prayer for the next year that His kingdom will come. It will be wonderful if we do not have this gathering next year. But if the Lord chooses to delay His coming, may we still live a kingdom life this year, allowing Him to be king, allowing His word to be made more sure in our heart. When that morning star does arrive, we will be there. We will be awake and ready to see it. We will not be asleep and miss it. We will be spiritually awake and alert in Him. And as that word is so real in our heart, we are those that are ready and in the spirit that will hasten His return. May the Lord help each one of us. May we in the same way that Peter did; respond to all His training and the way He is teaching us in this hour.

Let us pray.

Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, hallowed be Thy name in our life, that we may be a people known by Your name. Lord, at times we get frustrated in ourselves, but we confess at other times we like the life we are living. But that is only because we do not see the fullness of Yourself. Open the eyes of our hearts, Lord, to see You in a greater and fuller way. Lord, open the eyes of our heart to see how much You desire to return; how jealous You are to return; how jealous You are that the bride will make herself ready. Lord, thank you for this opportunity we have to learn of You. And may we, by Your grace respond. And grow in the grace and knowledge of You that the reality of Your life may be seen in Your people in this hour. In Thy name we pray. Amen.