

CONFIDENCE IN THE COMING CHRIST

I'd like to start out this morning with a question: Is it **easy** to live for God—or **hard**?

If we are **honest** about it—and **serious** about it—it is **hard** to live a life that is pleasing to God. **Why?** Peter gives us several reasons in the book of I Peter. Rather than just list them off for you, I think it would be good for you to **see them for yourselves**. So please turn to I Peter 1.

Why is living for God hard?

1) Because you will go through trials. We see that in I Peter 1:6 “ye are in heaviness”—you are distressed—“through manifold temptations” meaning various trials.

Notice **vs 7** “That the trial [meaning trying] of your faith...” Our faith—our belief in God’s Word—is **tested**—it is **tried**—when we go through difficult and unpleasant circumstances and situations.

2) Because our sin nature fights us. We see that in I Peter 2:11 “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts**, which war against your soul;”

We have lusts within us—strong desires—that fight against God’s **will** and God’s **Word**.

--We want to **please ourselves** and live for ourselves—instead of pleasing God and living for Him.

--We want to **seek first us** and our kingdom—instead of God’s.

--We want to **repay evil for evil** instead of loving those that hate us and hurt us.

3) Because we are sometimes punished for doing right. We see that in I Peter 2:19-20.

--Did you catch that? It is thankworthy—it is commendable—if you **do right and suffer for it!**

Not only that, Peter goes on to tell us that we should **be happy** if you suffer for doing right! I Peter 3:14 “But and if ye **suffer** for righteousness' sake, **happy are ye**: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;”

4) Because it will cost us friends. We see that in I Peter 4. In vs 3, Peter in essence says that before you were saved, you used to “party hardy.” But now that you don’t do that, those party friends speak evil of you!

Does the Bible say that? Yes, it does! Look at I Peter 4:4 “Wherein they think it strange that **ye run not with them** to the same excess of riot, **speaking evil of you**.”

5) Lastly, because the devil is always out to destroy us. We see that in I Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, **seeking whom he may devour**.”

Does the devil ever take a vacation? He doesn’t, does he? He is relentless—he keeps attacking—trying to wear us down and make us quit. In Revelation 12:10, he is called the **accuser** of the brethren—meaning believers—that **accuses** us before God. But he also **accuses us directly!** He whispers in our ears and tells us to give up because it’s not worth it—or casts doubts in our minds as to whether or not God’s Word is true.

Humanly speaking, the “deck is stacked against us,” isn’t it?

Trials can cause us to question God. **Our sin nature** pulls us away from God. Sometimes we are **punished—by people—for pleasing God**. Sometimes we **lose friends**—or family members—because we try to do right—and **the devil never gives us a break!**

No wonder Paul said in I Corinthians 15:19 “If **in this life only** we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most **miserable**.” So what motivates us? What keeps us going? How do we **know** living for God is worth it?

Look at II Peter 1:10. What is our reward if we **work hard** at our Christian life? What happens if we “make our calling and election sure”—meaning live your life **like a saved person**—and not like a child of the devil or an orphan?

In vs 11, Peter reminds us that we will have a **lavishly supplied, rich, hero’s entrance** into the **everlasting kingdom** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But how do we **know** there is such a kingdom? How do we **know** Jesus will return and reward us? After all, Jesus returned to heaven almost 2000 years ago and hasn’t come back yet! And scoffers are quick to point that out! They ask—according to II Peter 3:4 “Where is the promise of His coming?”

So again I ask, how do we **know** Jesus is coming? What do we base our belief on?

Peter said we can base it on **his eyewitness, first-hand account!** We see that in verses 16-18.

Let's consider first, **1. The content of what the apostles taught**

Before we look at **what** was taught, let's consider... A. The teachers

Vs 16 "For **we** have not followed..." It is interesting to note how Peter "switches gears," so to speak. In verse 12, 13, 14, and 15, Peter is referring primarily to **himself**: "I will not be negligent... I think it meet...I must put off...I will endeavour."

But then he switches to "**we**" in vs 16. Who is the "**we**"—besides Peter? Although it doesn't **plainly state** who the "we" is, we know that Peter **wasn't the only one** who saw Jesus on the mount of transfiguration; James and John were there, too! Which is a good thing because matters are established by the mouth of **two or three** witnesses—not just **one!**

The teachers, then, at a minimum, were Peter and John. (James was dead). Let's consider next: B. The teaching
What did they teach? Look again at verse 16 "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the **power and coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Most commentators point out that Peter is not referring to **two** different things; he is not referring to the **power** of Jesus and the **coming** of Jesus. Instead, he is referring to **only one**: the powerful coming...the mighty coming... the coming in power—of Jesus Christ! In other words, the emphasis is on **Christ's return**—and Peter had previously taught them about that. That's why he said, "...when we **made known**" (past tense).

I won't have you turn there, but here are a few places where Peter referred to the return of Christ in his **first letter** to these believers.

I Peter 1:7 "...at the **appearing** of Jesus Christ."

I Peter 1:13 "...at the **revelation** of Jesus Christ."

I Peter 4:13 "...that, when His glory shall be **revealed**, ye may be glad with exceeding joy."

I Peter 5:4 "...And when the chief Shepherd shall **appear**..."

It is also important to realize that Peter and John were **not the only ones** who wrote of the return of Christ in power. Dr. David Jeremiah states that 23 out of the 27 books in the NT have at least one reference regarding the return of Christ **from heaven back to earth!**

And let's not forget that Jesus Himself told the disciples about His glorious return from heaven back to earth! Matthew 24:30 "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall **see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**"

The **content** of their teaching? Jesus is coming—and you will be glad that you lived for Him when He does!

Next, let's consider... **2. The confidence in what they taught**

Peter had a confidence—a conviction—that the return of Christ was **an absolute certainty**. It was **going to happen**—PERIOD! What did he base that on? What was the source of his confidence?

First, A. What their source **was not**

Vs 16 "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables..." When we hear the word "fable," we often think of a **fictional story**—usually involving animals that talk and act like people—that teaches some kind of a life-lesson. Think Aesop's fables. Even though it may teach a good lesson, **we know** that a fable is make-believe.

That is not the case here, though. "**Fable**" here comes from the Greek word "moo'-thos" and is where we get the English word "myth" from. It is a **false** idea—that is put forth as **being true**—that replaces that which is actually true. Examples? Easter bunny, tooth fairy, and Santa!

Why did Peter write "we have not followed fables?" Probably because that is what the **false teachers were saying** about his teaching! He adamantly refuses it, of course. The source for what Peter and the apostles taught was **not false**—it was true. Not only that, they weren't following **anyone's** teaching. Their source was not **second-hand**—it was **first-hand!**

B. What their **source was**—an eyewitness account

We see that in the end of vs 16 "...but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

But what is it that they actually **saw**? We're not told—here! All we are told here is what they **heard**.

We see that in vs 17 where it refers to “a **voice**”—and in vs 18 where Peter writes that the three of them **heard that voice** from heaven. To understand what **they saw**, we need to go back to one of the accounts where this event took place. It **happened only once**, but it is recorded for us in the Bible by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We are only going to look at one, though, so let's turn to Matthew 16.

1) What they were told they would see.

Notice Mt 16:28. Jesus plainly states that some of them—before they died—would “see the Son of man” (what He called Himself) “coming in His kingdom.” Mark and Luke make a similar statement.

2) What they did see.

Now notice Mt 17:1-2. Jesus is transfigured before them; meaning He was changed. The word is “met-am-or-fo'-o” and is where we get the English word **metamorphosis** from. This word is also used in Romans 12:2 “Be not conformed to the world, but be ye **transformed** (met-am-or-fo) by the renewing of your mind.”

Jesus' **appearance** obviously changed—“His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.” Neither Mark nor Luke **added anything different** about Jesus' appearance. It is also interesting to notice that none of the three mention anything about seeing Jesus **seated as a king**.

In vss 3-4, they see Moses and Elijah there talking with Jesus. I pointed out last week that in the Luke 9 account, they spoke of Jesus **decease** meaning His departure—His exodus—back to heaven from earth.

Now vss 5-6. It is interesting to notice that they didn't fall on their faces in fear **until the bright cloud overshadowed them** and they heard a voice from heaven.

3) What they heard. What did they hear? What did the voice out of the cloud say? Middle of vs 5 “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.” Now, let's go back to II Peter 1.

Notice again the end of vs 16 “but we were eye witnesses of His majesty.” One question that is sometimes asked regarding this passage is this:

4) Why this example? Why did Peter use this account **to prove** Jesus would return? After all, Peter saw the resurrected Christ—multiple times—in a body that could literally go through walls. Why did he use **this example** instead of one of those? It's hard to know for sure, but here are a couple of ideas.

--The appearance of Christ in His **resurrected body** was somehow different than the **glorified Christ**. Here's what I mean. Many people saw the **resurrected** Christ—but were not struck with fear by His appearance. Here's a few examples.

--The two disciples that walked with the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) weren't struck with fear.

--In John 20, Mary Magdalene saw the resurrected Christ—and thought He was the **gardener!**

--And let's not forget that the apostle John saw Jesus in His **resurrected** body and was not afraid. But—when he had a vision of the **glorified Christ** in Revelation 1—John wrote, “I fell at His feet as dead.”

The point I'm making is this: When Christ was transfigured on the **mount of transfiguration**, He was in a more awe-inspiring state than He was after **His resurrection**—at least while on earth! And that very well could be why Peter used this as an example. It was a glimpse—although temporary—of the **glorified** Jesus!

A second reason, though, is because I believe there was **something different** about **the way God spoke** on the Mount of Transfiguration than He had before. Why do I say that? Because on two different occasions, God said from heaven “This is my beloved Son”: 1) when Jesus was baptized—as an adult by John the Baptist; and

2) at the Mount of Transfiguration that we just looked at in Matthew 17.

In the **baptism accounts**—found in Mt 3, Mark 1, and Luke 3—**none of the three writers** indicate that **anyone** was afraid when God spoke from heaven. However, in the mount of Transfiguration accounts, **each of the three writers** said that **all** the disciples were afraid.

So there was something about **what** God said—or **how** He said it—or both—that made a deep impression on Peter—so much so that Peter emphasized **what God said** over how Jesus looked. What exactly did **God say** about His Son?

That's what we are going to consider next and I'm calling it ... **3. The confirmation of the Father**

In Matthew 17, Matthew doesn't say **who** the voice was from—just that it was a voice **out of the cloud**. Both Mark 9 and Luke 9 say the same thing—it was a voice out of the cloud.

But now—35 years or so after the fact—Peter wants to make sure the readers know **who the speaker** was. **Who** was it? **God the Father!** Notice what else Peter calls God the Father in the middle of vs 17: "...when there came such a voice to Him [meaning to Jesus] from **the excellent glory**..."

What—or Who—is "the excellent glory?" It is easy to kind of skim past this and assume "excellent glory" is a reference **to heaven**. But if you think about it, **it can't be!** Heaven **doesn't speak**—and heaven doesn't **have a Son!** So, the One who speaks is **God the Father!** And Peter refers to the Father as "the excellent glory," meaning the One who has superb...magnificent...majestic glory!

Notice the 3 things that God the Father confirms to us about His Son.

A. The Father bestows honor and glory upon Jesus. We see that in vs 17: "For He received from God the Father honour and glory..." Why is that significant? Because God doesn't "hand out" honor and glory to just anyone! **Isaiah 42:8** "I am the Lord: that is my name: and **my glory will I not give to another**, neither my praise to graven images." **Isaiah 48:11b** "...and I will not **give my glory** unto another."

In other words, for God to give honor and glory to someone, they have to be **His equal**. And that, I believe, is the point! We sung earlier today in the song "Be Thou Exalted" this very thought:

"One with the Father, co-equal in glory."

B. The Father calls Jesus His beloved Son. We see that in vs 17, too: "...This is my beloved Son..." The original language is much more picturesque and literally reads: "The Son of Me; the beloved of Me." What is the significance of God the Father calling Jesus His Son?

John 5:28 "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him [Jesus], because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself **equal with God**." The Jews understood that when **Jesus said** God was His Father, He was claiming **to be God!**

And the same is true **the other way around!** When the **Father says** that Jesus is His Son, He is confirming that Jesus **was... is...always has been...and always will be—GOD!**

C. The Father is well-pleased with the Son. Once again, we see that in vs 17 "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Not a **little** pleased—**well** pleased. And—reading between the lines—not "once in a while" pleased—but **always** pleased!

That means that God the Father was pleased with who **Jesus was**...and what **Jesus said**...and with what Jesus **did!**

Back to verse 16: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables"—we have not followed myths—"when we made known to you the powerful future coming of Jesus Christ."

Why was Peter so convinced that Jesus is going to return? **What does he base** his belief on? Because he got a glimpse of the glorified Christ—and he heard God Himself say of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

That brings us to... **4. The conclusion by us**

What about us? What is our opinion of Jesus? Do we have the same view **of Jesus** that God the Father has?

A. Do you ascribe to Jesus honor and glory?

If you don't now, you certainly will someday! Why do I say that? Because God's honoring of Jesus wasn't just a one-time declaration on the Mount of Transfiguration. **Philippians 2:9-11** reminds us of the honor God placed on His Son after Jesus' death for us on the cross: "Wherefore God also hath **highly exalted Him**, and given **Him a name which is above every name**: ¹⁰That at the **name of Jesus** every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; ¹¹And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The God of heaven honors the Son! **Do you?**

B. Do you love Jesus, the Son of God?

The Father did—and exclaimed it loudly from heaven! What about you? Do you love Jesus? How do you prove that you love Him? Jesus Himself told us in **John 14:15** "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

C. Are you “well-pleased” with Jesus?

Are you satisfied with what **who** Jesus is—and what **He did** on the cross to save you? God the Father certainly is! How do we know? Because God has declared that eternal life is found **only in His Son**.

That’s why **John 3:36** says, “He that believeth on the Son **hath everlasting life**: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the **wrath of God abideth on him**.”

That’s why **Acts 4:12** says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, **whereby we must be saved**.”

And that’s why **I John 5:12** says, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

God the Father is obviously well-pleased with what Jesus did. Are you? If so, you will receive Him for yourself as your Savior!

I want **to end** the message the same way **I began** by asking this question: Is it easy to live for God?

No, it’s not! But it will be worth it if we do!

Why? Because Jesus is coming back and will reward His faithful, obedient children with a “well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

How do we know? Because Peter heard God the Father say from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

So what does God want **you to do** in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First, be honest about what you are counting on to get to heaven. **Works don’t work**—that’s why Jesus left heaven and came to earth! His death on the cross for our sins is the only payment that God is satisfied with. But you need to have Jesus as your Savior—not just know about Him.

2. Second, be encouraged, weary Christian. Jesus is coming back and will set everything right. God has declared it and it will happen.

One of two things will happen for God’s children when they meet Jesus.

--**Jesus will say** well done, thou good and faithful servant;

OR... **we will say** “I wish I had given Him more.”