

# OpenTheo

## October 8th: 1 Kings 22 & 2 Peter 1

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The death of Ahab. Peter's final message.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

1 Kings 22 For three years Syria and Israel continued without war. But in the third year Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, Do you know that Ramoth-Gilead belongs to us, and we keep quiet and do not take it out of the hand of the king of Syria? And he said to Jehoshaphat, Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-Gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.

And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Inquire first for the word of the Lord. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-Gilead, or shall I refrain? And they said, Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here another prophet of the Lord of whom we may inquire? And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord, Micaiah the son

of Imla, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil.

And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, Bring quickly Micaiah the son of Imla. Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

And Zedekiah the son of Canaanite made for himself horns of iron and said, Thus says the Lord, With these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed. And all the prophets prophesied so, and said, Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and triumph, the Lord will give it into the hand of the king. And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, Behold the words of the prophets, with one accord are favourable to the king.

Let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favourably. But Micaiah said, As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak. And when he had come to the king, the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we refrain? And he answered him, Go up and triumph, the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.

But the king said to him, How many times shall I make you swear that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord? And he said, I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, These have no master, let each return to his home in peace. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil? And Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of the Lord.

I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who will entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, I will entice him.

And the Lord said to him, By what means? And he said, I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, You are to entice him, and you shall succeed. Go out and do so.

Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets. The Lord has declared disaster for you. Then Zedekiah the son of Canaan came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, How did the spirit of the Lord go from me to speak to you? And Micaiah said, Behold, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide yourself.

And the king of Israel said, Seize Micaiah and take him back to Ammon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son, and say, Thus says the king, Put this fellow in

prison, and feed him meagre rations of bread and water, until I come in peace. And Micaiah said, If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me. And he said, Hear all you peoples.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-Gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, Fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel. And when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, It is surely the king of Israel. So they turned to fight against him.

And Jehoshaphat cried out. And when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. But a certain man drew his bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the scale armour and the breastplate.

Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn round and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded. And the battle continued that day. And the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, until at evening he died.

And the blood of the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot. And about sunset a cry went through the army, Every man to his city, and every man to his country. So the king died, and was brought to Samaria.

And they buried the king in Samaria. And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria. And the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of the Lord that he had spoken.

Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house that he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahazar his son reigned in his place. Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Azuba, the daughter of Shilhai. He walked in all the way of Asa his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And from the land he exterminated the remnant of the male cult prostitutes who remained in the days of his father Asa.

There was no king in Edom. A deputy was king. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geba.

Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with your servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat was not willing. And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place.

Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked the Lord the God of Israel to anger in every way that his father had done.

Throughout the books of the kings, the prophets are central actors. Whether or not kings respond in the appropriate way to the message of the prophets is an important part of the story throughout. This has been an especially prominent theme in the story of Ahab.

He and his wife Jezebel have killed prophets of the Lord. Elijah has had a number of run-ins with them. In chapter 20 a prophet declared judgment upon him after his failure to judge Ben-Hadad.

In the previous story of Naboth's vineyard, he had been responsible for the death of Naboth, a man whose name recalls the term for prophecies. At the end of that chapter Elijah had declared the doom of his house. Now in chapter 22, the last chapter of 1 Kings, we find a story in which prophets are prominent once more.

After three years of peace between Syria and Israel, Ahab is angry because Syria has not kept up their end of the treaty. Ben-Hadad had promised to restore to Ahab all of the cities that had been taken from his father, presumably Be'asha, not his actual father but one of his predecessors on the throne. However, Ramoth-Gilead in the Transjordan on the border between Israel and Syria had not been restored to Israel.

It's an important strategic city. It's also on a trade route and the city should have been returned to Israel after chapter 20 according to the agreement with Ben-Hadad. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah has come to Israel and he has allied with Ahab.

In verse 4 he declares, Jehoshaphat fighting alongside Ahab and identifying himself with Ahab is a concerning development. Jehoshaphat is a righteous man as he's described later in this chapter but Ahab seems to be playing the dominant role in this alliance and Jehoshaphat's alliance with him is an over-identification with an unfaithful ruler and kingdom. Jehoshaphat's father Asa had paid the Syrians to turn against Israel.

This is something for which the Lord had judged him and now his son Jehoshaphat is

helping Israel to fight against the enemies that he had raised up against them. The concerning prospect here is the possibility of a kingdom united under Ahab in idolatry. One of the blessings of division is that it provides a fire break for sin.

As long as Israel and Judah are separated, the idolatry of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and his successors such as Ahab cannot spread to the southern kingdom so easily. However, in the reign of Jehoshaphat and his son, there will be a much closer identification between the two kingdoms until Jehu comes on the scene in judgement. Jehoshaphat is a righteous king and before he is prepared to take any action he wants to call for the prophets.

Four hundred prophets are gathered together. The gathering together of prophets might remind us of chapter 18 verse 20. The same language is used there which is not common elsewhere.

And we also see another four hundred prophets there. The four hundred prophets of Asherah and we see the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. In chapter 18 we have one true prophet facing off against four hundred false ones at Mount Carmel, Elijah against the prophets of Baal.

But now these caught prophets are the false prophets of the Lord and they are going to be standing against Micaiah who is the true prophet of the Lord. When Jehoshaphat hears the word of Zedekiah, he either recognises that something is off or he wants to find some confirming word from some other prophet. The fact that the four hundred prophets are speaking the exact same word together suggests to him that either they need some confirmation in a secondary witness or the prophecy is a flattering one and a false one.

When the prophet Micaiah is mentioned, despite the fact that he tends to bring negative words, he insists on summoning him. That he is fairly easy to summon suggests that he might be near at hand in the king's prison to which he will be returned later on. Whereas the prophets of chapter 18 were false prophets of Baal, these are false prophets who seem to be speaking in the name of the Lord.

This is a much more subtle form of falsehood and takes a lot of wisdom to discern. We might recall the story of chapter 13 with the false prophet of Bethel who leads astray the man of God from Judah. Now there is another man from Judah, Jehoshaphat, who is in danger of being led astray by the false prophets of the king of Samaria.

As he is summoned to the king, Micaiah is requested to give a flattering word, to say what he ought to say, and yet he insists he will speak only in the name of the Lord. When he does give an answer to the king, his answer is originally a mimicking of the other prophets. In verse 15, Go up and triumph, the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.

He repeats the words of the caught prophets but Ahab charges him not to lie. Perhaps he is speaking in a sarcastic manner, or perhaps Ahab himself knows that his caught prophets are flatterers rather than speakers of the truth, and that Micaiah, as a righteous prophet of the Lord, would not willingly engage in such flattery, so must purposefully be lying to him. When Micaiah gives his full answer, he predicts the defeat of Israel, and then he declares a vision of a higher court.

There is a parallel between two scenes, Jehoshaphat and Ahab in their rule, and the Lord in his rule. There is an earthly court with its kings, and then there is a higher heavenly court with its king. In verse 10, Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

And then in verses 19 to 20, I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heavens standing beside him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who will entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said one thing, and another said another. The vision here is of the divine council.

On a number of occasions in scripture we have visions or accounts of the Lord sitting on his throne, surrounded by his various ministers, his angels and other heavenly beings, and also prophets who by visions are also part of this assembly. We might have some sense of the divine council in such expressions such as let us in Genesis chapter 1 verse 26, or the let us go down in the story of the tarot of Babel. We might also get some sense of the divine council in places such as Job 1, with the sons of God presenting themselves before the Lord, or in Isaiah 6 and the vision of Isaiah the prophet, or in Revelation and the various scenes of the throne room, or in places like Zechariah and the vision of the dispute between the angel of the Lord and Satan.

Here the Lord seeks someone to entice Ahab to his doom, and after a number come forward, a spirit, or perhaps the spirit, comes forward and says that he will entice Ahab, he will be a lying spirit in the mouths of all of his prophets. The Lord sends the spirit and with him deception to Ahab. The Lord sends the deception, but he also declares that he is sending the deception, in the prophecy of Micaiah, concerning the truth of which Ahab has some sense.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 9 to 12 we read, The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan, with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Those verses suggest that people's susceptibility to lies arises in part from their hatred of the truth.

If you do not love the truth you will easily be taken in by lies. Throughout the book of

Proverbs we find a similar theme. Those who love to be flattered, those who will not be humble and start with the fear of the Lord, are people who are ripe for being deceived.

Deep down they want to be deceived, they want to be told things that flatter them and make them feel good, things that confirm them in their current way. They will, like Ahab with his court prophets, gather people around them who confirm them and refuse to listen to people like Micaiah who oppose them or suggest that they might have to change in some respect that they do not want to. Many of the speakers of our own age are false prophets, people who seek the praise of men by telling them what they want to hear.

Such people will never be short of an appreciative following and it is worth noting the way that people will seek after false prophets, even though they know that they are not people who are committed to the truth. They want to be confirmed in their way and they will gravitate towards the flatterer even though they know that the flatterer is not telling them the truth. True servants of God must follow the example of Micaiah, speaking the truth of the Lord even if it leads to persecution, while also recognizing the judgment of the Lord in the deception that he has spread among his people, deception that exposes those who truly love the truth from those who have no appetite for it and want to believe the lie.

Zedekiah, the leader of the false prophets, strikes Micaiah on the cheek. Micaiah has humiliated him, declaring his prophecies to be false and he asks, how did the spirit of the Lord go from me to speak to you? If the spirit of the Lord is really deceiving, then how did he get into your mouth? Micaiah answers, behold you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide yourself. We might recall the hiding of Ben Hadad in chapter 20 here.

Ahab is angry and he puts Micaiah into prison with the instruction that he be fed meagre rations until he returns in peace, proving his prophecy wrong. Yet Ahab does have some sense of concern and so he determines that he will disguise himself while he instructs Jehoshaphat to wear his robes. Jehoshaphat will be the target while Ahab will not be easy to find.

The king of Syria seeks to kill the king of Israel and isn't especially concerned about everyone else and so they pursue Jehoshaphat thinking him to be Ahab, yet when Jehoshaphat cries out it becomes apparent to them that he is not in fact Ahab and they turn off from the pursuit. Elsewhere in 2nd Chronicles we are told that he cried out in prayer to the Lord. Ahab was foolish to believe that he could escape the judgment of the Lord.

A certain man draws his bow at random and unerringly the arrow finds its target, a weakness in the armour of Ahab. The king is propped up in the chariot and he gradually bleeds out. Then according to the prophecy of Micaiah all of Israel are sent back to their

homes and they return in peace.

The king dies, he is brought to Samaria and then the dogs lick the blood off the chariot by the pool of Samaria. Reminding us of the prophecy of Elijah in the preceding chapter. The prostitutes also wash themselves in the water.

Whether they are doing this because they are usually washed in that pool or for superstitious reasons about the blood of a king giving some particular power, the important point is that Ahab's end is a humiliating one. After a summary account of the reign of Ahab we are told about Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, is a faithful king.

He follows in the footsteps of his father Asa, although he fails to remove the high places and he makes peace with the king of Israel, seemingly a more favourable terms to Israel than to Judah. Like Solomon before him he has power over the kingdom of Edom and as a result has access to the port of Ezeongiba. He constructs ships of Tarshish.

Presumably we are to understand by this ships according to the design of Tarshish, perhaps with the help of the Phoenicians. However the ships will not be in the Mediterranean but going down the Gulf of Aqaba, perhaps down to Africa or parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Various suggestions have been put forward for the intended destination of this fleet of ships.

We don't know where Ophir was, some have speculated that it was India. While Solomon's fleet of ships was amazingly successful, Jehoshaphat's fleet fails. They are wrecked at Ezeongiba.

Like Solomon, Jehoshaphat is someone who enjoys a great period of peace. He follows after a faithful king and walks in his ways. He builds ships and sends his men for gold.

His kingdom is extended and he has various cosmopolitan dealings with other kings. However in inviting such comparisons with Solomon, what we see more than anything else is how the House of David has declined over the years. Their former glory has been much diminished.

Even though there is still faithfulness to be found in the House of David, the kingdom has greatly declined from the zenith of its golden age under Solomon. Alongside the tarnishing of the glory of the Southern Kingdom, the Northern Kingdom continues in its way of wickedness, continuing in the path of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin. Ahaziah the son of Ahab and Jezebel continues in their way and brings Israel along with him.

A question to consider, how can we develop a love of truth that saves us from deception? 2 Peter chapter 1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Saviour



Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. For if you practice these qualities you will never fall, for in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths 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 honour and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to Him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. As we start into the book of 2 Peter, we should remark upon some of the distinctive qualities of the book and its difficulties at the outset. The first thing to say is that almost anyone who has read the New Testament carefully has noticed that the book of Jude and the book of 2 Peter have extensive similarities.

Beyond this, it has a very different style from the book of 1 Peter. This is something that

was recognised back in the time of the early church, Calvin and others have commented upon it, and various theories have been presented for why it might be the case. Not least the possibility that the creative hand of an amanuensis is very much in evidence in this letter.

The Hellenistic concepts and language have also provoked debate, people wondering whether a Galilean fisherman would write in such terms. The book of 2 Peter also struggled to be accepted as canonical, which might seem strange for a book of genuine Petrine origin. Others have noticed similarities with 1 and 2 Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas, which date from the end of the 1st century, but are post-apostolic works.

Then there are internal issues as well. Many read chapter 3 verses 2-4 as suggesting that the apostles have already died, which would cause problems as Peter is clearly one of the apostles himself. We also know that in the early centuries of the church there was various pseudepigraphical material going around, material that claimed to be written by a particular author but was not actually written by that historical character.

There were a number of such works that claimed to arise from Peter. In light of such considerations, the vast majority of scholars do not believe that the book of 2 Peter was authored by Peter himself. Richard Borkham, who is one who doubts that Peter is the author, puts forward a theory that somewhat cushions the blow, a theory that need not undermine the authority of scripture.

He maintains that the book belongs to a testamentary genre, a genre that was known to be fictional, and so people reading the text would not be deceived, they would know that they were reading a fictional work, and interspersed with it there were things relating to the present day situation of those reading it, so they would clearly know that it was not written by the historical Peter. Rather, a fictionalised personification of Peter was addressing their situation as a faithful yet fictional construct. Attractive as such a theory may be, as a way of cutting the Gordian knot of the questions of the authorship and dating of the book, it is not ultimately satisfying.

Thomas Schreiner has raised a number of problems with this theory, observing that the early church was far more hostile towards pseudepigraphical works than Richard Borkham's theory would suggest. Such works were not merely regarded as pious fictions, but as actual misleading of people. While this might be slightly overstating the situation, it is noteworthy that, of all the books that claimed to be written by Peter that were clearly pseudepigraphical, none of them actually found their way into the New Testament, except for the book of 2 Peter, if it were in fact pseudepigraphical, written by someone other than the person it purports to be written by.

Then there is the question of the testamentary genre. Is it in fact the case that this genre is always fictional? We seem to find examples of this sort of material at various points in the Old Testament, for instance at the end of Jacob's life, or the end of Moses' life, or the

end of David's life. Are there established norms of genre that make clear that these are in fact fictional? It's not clear that there are.

As for the relationship with the book of Jude, various theories have been put forward. Some have suggested a common source for the two books, others have suggested that Jude borrowed from the book of 2 Peter, but the most likely explanation to me seems to be that 2 Peter uses a lot of the material of Jude, Jude being the earlier of the two texts. As for questions of literary style, we are working with very little material, and it is tricky to judge on such a limited basis.

It is even more difficult to judge when we consider the possibilities of different secretaries being involved, and the possibility in both books of the use of extensive prior material. In the case of 1 Peter, there's suggestion that there might be extensive liturgical material included into the book, and in the case of 2 Peter, the use of material from the book of Jude. Thomas Schreiner has also noted the possibility of allusions to material from the book of 2 Peter, back in works from the end of the 1st century AD, referring his readers to scholarly research that has been done on the subject.

There are claims that the book of 2 Peter suggests that the apostles have already died is not compelling. The letter begins with a familiar form of introduction, a style that we find both in Pauline letters and in other secular letters of the time. Peter introduces himself as Simeon Peter, a name used of him elsewhere only in Acts chapter 15.

He refers to Jesus Christ as our God and Saviour. Now that could be read as our God and our Saviour, but it seems most likely it should be read as our God and Saviour. Usually when such distinction is intended, it's far more clear within the Greek.

At the very outset then, we would have a very high Christology. The faith of the Christians to whom Peter is writing is no less precious than that of the apostles themselves. Their faith is described as being of equal standing, seemingly with the apostles themselves.

He goes on to talk about the basis of our salvation, relating it all to his divine power, which in the context would seem to be a reference back to Christ. We have come to know Christ by his effectual call to glory, and through coming to know Jesus, we have been granted divine power that gives us everything that we need for eternal life. Christ, through his glory and goodness, has given great promises to his people, promises that make them partakers of the divine nature, releasing them from the corruption of this present world on account of sinful desire.

In speaking of being partakers of the divine nature, Peter is using Hellenistic language. We should think about this in terms of what theologians have talked about as God's communicable and non-communicable attributes. God's non-communicable attributes are things like his infinity, his aseity, his omnipotence, his omniscience.

No creature can take on these attributes. However, God's communicable attributes can be taken on by creatures in an analogical sense. So God's holiness, God's humility, God's kindness, God's love, and all these other characteristics are things that we can take on, and in the process, become more godlike.

We can become godly, being conformed to the image of God in Christ, taking on something of his character and his glory. Our faces shine as we reflect his glory. In the light of the fundamental fact of our salvation in Christ, we have an imperative of growth.

Verses 3-4 present our salvation in its most comprehensive and fundamental character, as a gracious work of God and of his own initiative, and a gracious work that has sufficiently provided us with everything that we need. Faith must become fruitful, however, maturing into something fuller. The fundamental posture of trust in God must work itself out into a fuller and richer set of qualities that derive from it.

In this, however, we will be growing from the rich soil that God's grace has provided for us, not from our own resources. As verses 3 and 4 make clear, God has given us everything that we need. He presents a chain of qualities, but it's not necessarily a sequence.

We don't need to develop these one by one in succession. Rather, we should be developing them all at the same time. However, the movement from faith at the beginning to love at the end is probably significant.

Love is the capstone of everything. It is the theological virtue that's prized over all the others, in 1 Corinthians 13, for instance. Because Christ has given us everything that we need for life and godliness, we must pursue such growth.

Peter singles out virtue, which we might understand as moral courage. Knowledge, which will be a deep apprehension of God's truth in Christ. Self-control.

Self-mastery in the book of Proverbs, for instance, is a mark of maturity. Steadfastness or patience. Godliness, a God-fearing character and a life that is oriented to and around God.

Brotherly affection, a concern for each other in Christ. And then, as the culminating quality, love. We must pursue these qualities and seek to increase in them, lest we become ineffective or unfruitful.

That is the key danger, that our faith is not actually growing. There's a danger of forgetting sins that we have been forgiven and the new life that we have been brought into. He charges them to confirm your calling and election.

The calling and election stresses God's unilateral action. However, God's unilateral grace to us must be confirmed in our faithful response. Peter's point here is not dissimilar from

that which we find in Philippians chapter 2 verses 12 to 13.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. The salvation that we have been given is not just a sort of spiritual life insurance.

Rather, it is something that brings us into a new form of life and fellowship. And we confirm this by actually living the life that we have been given, living out the salvation that has been granted to us. To be given a life and not to live it is a mockery.

And so we are called to live out what God has given us, thereby confirming his unilateral work of grace towards us. There is a last judgment according to works. And in God's judgment upon our works, our initial justification will be confirmed.

This will not be a matter of us adding to what God has given us, as if there needs to be some works to complement God's grace, as if God's grace was not enough. As Peter has already said, God has given us everything that we need. Rather, this is the form that God's salvation takes.

This is the path that God has furnished for us. And so those who receive God's salvation enter into it fully by living it out. This is how God's calling and election is confirmed in our lives.

Peter is shortly about to die. And this gives its book some of its testamentary character. He notes that Jesus had told him about the manner in which he would die in John chapter 21 verses 18 to 19.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.

And after saying this, he said to him, follow me. Peter wants to make preparation for them in the future. He is writing not merely for the present, but for the time when he leaves to ensure that they are prepared for what will come.

And to confirm them in what they have been taught, he talks about the event of the transfiguration. In the transfiguration, Peter, James and John saw something of the glory of Christ, a glory that was a reality-filled sign of the glory to come in the great unveiling of Christ at the end. Also a glory that confirms the Old Testament teaching.

The transfiguration is the unveiling of Christ as the majestic king and of his kingdom rule in his father's glory. The transfiguration, Douglas Haranck argues, is an anticipatory apocalypse, much as that experienced by John on Patmos or Saul on the road to

Damascus. He writes, because the apostles at the transfiguration have, for a moment, already seen and heard Jesus Christ enthroned at the end of the ages in his divine majesty and glory, they are now also already certain that he will in fact come to judge the earth and its inhabitants and set up his eternal reign over all things and all peoples.

The transfiguration, then, is a guarantee of the coming realisation of all of the prophetic promises. It's the prophetic word made more sure. It's also important to recognise that, for Peter, the future coming of Christ is framed less by the times and dates for some future divine action than it is by the person of Jesus Christ.

The future coming of Christ is the coming revelation of the glory of Christ, a glory that he already possesses and which Peter saw for himself. What we look forward to is not so much a series of eschatological events but the revelation of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, as Peter proceeds to argue in verses 20-21, the transfiguration serves to validate and confirm the prophetic word of scripture.

It demonstrates that it is not of human origin or will. It's given by the inspiration of the spirit of God. And in the transfiguration, both the unifying origin, Jesus Christ, the one who speaks God's word, and the referent, the one to whom it points, Jesus, the glorified son, of the of scripture is disclosed.

The scriptures find their coherence in their common spirit-inspired witness and revelation of the glory that is seen in Jesus Christ. The prominence that the transfiguration is accorded within the second epistle of Peter, then, merits closer attention. In his commentary on the epistle, Harring suggests that, for Peter, it is the transfiguration, rather than the cross or the resurrection, that is put forward as the decisive Christological event.

This revelation of the glory of Christ is the revelation of the final truth and reality of all things. The same light that first illumined the world is the light that will dawn in the coming final day. It's the light witnessed on the holy mountain.

Harring remarks, By recalling the glorious apocalyptic event of the transfiguration of our Lord, Peter directs a strong word against the theological rationalisms, reductionisms, and relativisms of his age and ours. While he offers a vigorous apologia for the truth of the gospel, he does not appeal to a foundation in universal rational first principles, available to everyone everywhere, or to an a priori universal religious sense, variously modified by historical and cultural experience, the standard post-enlightenment modes of apologia for religious truth. Instead, Peter goes directly to his and the other apostles being eyewitnesses of an apocalypse of the truth of Jesus Christ.

That apocalypse of the truth of all things is itself the origin and criterion of all claims about God and the beginning and end of all things. A question to consider, how might we retell the story of scripture in a way that presented the dazzling glory of Christ seen on

the mount of transfiguration as the centre of the entire thing?