

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 7- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Luke 6:12-16

83- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 7

Peter- Part 4

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Luke 6:12-16

¹² **It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.**

¹³ **And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:**

¹⁴ **Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;**

¹⁵ **and Matthew and Thomas; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;**

¹⁶ **Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**

Now this is a section in our Journey through **Luke** where Jesus chooses 12 men to carry on the Ministry of the New Covenant after He has ascended back up into Heaven. And verse 13 says that Jesus named these men "apostles". So these men were very important to God and they should be very important to us as well.

And we are camping here on this passage for a while so we can get to know all that the Bible teaches us about these men called Apostles. And over the last several weeks- we have begun to learn about Peter, and Lord willing, we should wrap this up today and then move on to Andrew and James and John and the rest.

Now as I told you last time- this is the passage where Dr. Luke records for us Jesus selecting twelve men out of all of the many followers that He had. And we need to remember that there were some of His followers that Jesus Himself had called. But there were also some who followed Jesus voluntarily- and they willingly attached themselves to Jesus, and so based on that- it would be reasonable for us to assume that there were hundreds and hundreds of people following Jesus.

But out of that large group of “disciples” or better known as “learners”, because the Greek word *mathetes* means: *learners*- so out of that large, large group of learners- Jesus selected twelve of them to be Apostles.

And it tells us in **Luke 6:12** that Jesus spent the whole night in very intense and agonizing prayer- way up in the mountains- by Himself- struggling to be sure that the men that He picked were indeed the very men that God the Father had chosen.

And Luke tells us that the very next day- Jesus called His disciples to Him- the whole large group of learners and out of them- out of the large group of learners- Jesus chose twelve men and called them His Apostles.

So to be an Apostle is to be a “sent messenger”. And so, here we are in the time when the Lord Jesus begins the internship of the Twelve. And I think it is interesting for us to note that we are only in chapter six of Luke's record of the life of Jesus- and we are in the thirty-first year of Jesus' Life. And so there is less than two years remaining in Jesus' earthly Life to fill up the rest of this very long Gospel record- 24 chapters- some of them with many, many verses, and some very long chapters.

So we have covered 31 years of Jesus' Life in just 6 Chapters and now in the remaining 18 Chapters of Luke- we will cover only the last two years of Jesus' Life. So even though many of you think we are just crawling along in this Journey through Luke- we have, in fact, gone in very rapid succession through His birth, and then you have nearly twelve years of silence with just one incident at the age of twelve- then another 18 years of silence and then the beginning of His ministry at about the age of 30.

So, from now on- through the remainder of this great Gospel Record- we will not be looking at decades in the life of Jesus- but we will be looking at months and weeks and days and hours, and even moments as we look deeper and deeper into the details of the remaining life of Jesus on the earth.

So with just that little bit of time left- it's really very important for Jesus to choose those who will succeed Him and who will carry the Gospel to the world after the Lord is gone. And so here we meet these men in verses 14 through 16.

So here Jesus pulls these men out of the crowd and into a 24-hour a day intimate association with Him in which He will now mentor them so that they might become the Apostles of the Gospel who would go into all the world and proclaim His message after His Resurrection and Ascension.

And I've been telling you now for several weeks that even though these men were specially chosen and specially gifted and equipped- they were just very common, ordinary men. None of them is prominent, none of them is well-known, and none of them has any place in history whatsoever. They have no social prominence, they have no religious prominence, they have no economic status, but they are the commonest of the common.

And not only are they the commonest of the common- but they were obviously very deficient in some pretty vital areas. Because as we get to know them through the rest of the story of Luke's Gospel- we will find out that they were very deficient in spiritual insight, they were deficient in spiritual understanding, they were grossly deficient in humility, they were deficient in faith, deficient in commitment, and deficient in power.

So the Lord had a tremendous amount of work to do to turn this motley crew into Apostles who, then, in turn- these men turned the world upside down.

Now the leader of this group of twelve clearly is a man named Simon whom Jesus also named Peter. And Peter is identified as the first- the protos- the prototype- or the leading Apostle in **Matthew 10:2**. And it's clear that he's the leader. As I told you- there are four lists of the Apostles in the New Testament: In **Matthew**, and in **Mark**, and in **The Acts** and here in **Luke**, and in every case- Peter's name is always first. So he is the leader.

But even though Peter was the leader- he certainly wasn't the leader that the Lord wanted him to be yet, and so there is now going to be a process that goes on in Peter's life to shape him and mold him into the leader that the Lord wants him to be. And we've been learning a little bit about that process over the last several weeks.

Now as I told you, for the Lord to make Peter into a leader there had to be three elements brought into our consideration. Number one was the right raw material. If he was going to be a leader, there were certain things that had to be in the very fabric of his DNA and his sort

of genetic makeup. It is true that all genuine leaders are initially born to be leaders. That is God's Sovereignty at work to give certain people what they need at birth to be what God wants them to be.

And then, of course, they have to be properly shaped because no person will ever be what God wants them to be- no matter how much raw talent is there- unless they go through the appropriate training.

I read a couple of weeks ago an interesting comment. Somebody was doing a study of all of the young people who shoot people at these schools and kill other students. And a common denominator, according to this report, in each of those young people's case was Ritalin. They were all on Ritalin as children.

And what that means is that instead of these young people being disciplined, instead of being properly and godly and biblically trained, instead of their youthful lusts and their immature cravings and their natural fleshly desires being properly managed and put into a Biblical discipline- and letting whatever their natural personality was be brought under the control and order of the Holy Spirit- these young people were simply drugged into a stupor.

And, of course, all that did was to artificially suppress any kind of real manifestation of their sinfulness- rather than expose it and deal with it. And so as soon as they were taken off the drugs- all that evil inside them just explodes. All because it was never acknowledged and shaped and molded.

So training is absolutely critical for anybody and everybody, and that was the personal Work of Jesus as He walked on earth with these men, and that is the Work of The Holy Spirit in our lives now that Jesus is gone back to the Father.

So Peter had the right raw material, inquisitiveness and initiative and involvement- but now he also needed the right experiences. And so Jesus brought into Peter's life the necessary environment, the necessary experiences, and dragged Peter through the kind of things in life that shaped him into being what he needed to be. And through a number of experiences- both incredibly wonderful and agonizingly terrible- Peter learned critical lessons for his future leadership.

He learned, for example, through experience, that God would speak through him and that he wasn't dependent upon a human message, but that he would be given the correct Message directly from God. We no longer get Revelation directly from God in the same way

that Peter did- we get revelation and we get understanding and we get instruction and we get Truth from Scripture- but Peter did receive Divine Revelation directly from God and is one of the human writers of inspired Scripture.

Peter also learned through experience that God would use him for supernatural influence. He would be given the keys, as it were, to the Kingdom. And all that means is that his life and his message would have such an impact that he would be unlocking the Kingdom of God so that men and women could go in. And the greatest possible influence on the planet is to be used by God to open the door to eternal life. And Peter would have that kind of influence.

And Peter would also learn by experience that he would be vulnerable to satan- that satan could fill his mouth just as easy as God could. And he did. Peter learned better than anyone else that when he tried to tell Jesus not to go to the Cross and die for the sins of the world and Jesus said to him, "**Get behind Me, Satan,**" that his mouth and his voice could be used for satan's purposes if he didn't submit to the will of God.

So Peter had to learn that if you don't do the Will of God on purpose and you don't do what the Lord wants done- then you are automatically doing the will of satan and you are part and parcel to the plan of the enemy himself.

Peter also fell victim to satan at the time of his denial when satan sifted him. So he was very vulnerable and he learned that. Peter had to learn that if he didn't fully submit to the Lord's Plan and the Lord's Purpose- then he could be used by satan so easy it was scary.

Peter also learned by experience that he was humanly weak and he couldn't trust his own resolve and he couldn't trust his own strength and he couldn't trust his own determination because he had said, you remember, that he would never in a thousand years ever deny the Lord.

If anybody ever denied the Lord- Peter would never deny the Lord because he wasn't like everybody else, he was better than that, he was stronger than that, he loved Jesus and he would never do that. He would die before he ever did that.

And, of course, he went right out and denied the Lord three times in one night- one time right after the other. But God was in Peter even in that- because through that horrible failure and through that horrible weakness- Peter learned firsthand how frail his flesh was, and how frail

all flesh is, and easy it is to sin, and so he learned without any doubt at all just how watchful and how careful and how thoughtful and how God-dependent he had to be.

So through the very uncomfortable and very agonizing things that God allowed Peter to go through- Peter learned that, in spite, of his tendency toward overstating his strength, and in spite of his own real weakness, and in spite of his ever present availability to satan- the Lord wanted to use him.

And even after all his foibles and all his failures and all his defections- it was the Lord Himself Who met him there in **John 21** by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and Who recommissioned Peter into the ministry and Who used him mightily from that point on.

And so as I said last time- God only has such people to use because all of us are just like this. God only has the weak and the vulnerable, and God only has those who can be just as useful to satan as they are to God. God has only those who overestimate their own abilities and their own strength and their own integrity. All God has to use on this earth is the weakest of the weak, and so unless God wants to use Himself Sovereignly- God has to make something out of nothing. And that's exactly what He did with Peter, and that's exactly what He does with us.

And so, you have to have the right raw material and you have to have the right experiences. And the third element is you have to have the right character. And this is absolutely critical because the simple truth is this, folks, character does matter.

We've had a long dialogue in our country over the last twenty years or so about whether character matters anymore. Well, the Bible says that character matters a lot.

Simply understood- character causes people to respect you, and respect causes people to trust you, and trust causes people to follow you. So character is what makes leadership possible. It makes consistent leadership possible. Where you have no character- you can't really be the leader, and all you can do without character is make the other people who have no character either feel better about themselves.

So, true godly leadership in the purest sense has character and character produces respect and respect produces trust and trust produces followers.

If you look at what just makes up natural, human leadership out in the world- you're going to hear words like "trustworthy" and "respectable" and "unselfish" and "humble" and "consistent" and "self-disciplined" and "self-controlled" and "courageous" And those are virtues that society recognizes that belong to real leaders, and certainly those things are a reflection of the *"amagio deo"*, they are a reflection of the very Image of God in Man for all of those things are attributes of God and of Christ.

Christ is perfectly trustworthy, perfectly respectable, perfectly unselfish, and perfectly humble in His amazing humiliation. He demonstrated perfect consistency, perfect self-discipline, perfect self-control, perfect love, perfect obedience, perfect submission, perfect courage, and perfect integrity. So, in other words- Jesus was absolutely consistent with Himself as being God and absolutely consistent with Himself as being Man so that all the truest and all the purest and all the highest and all the noblest attributes of mankind are simply very poor reflections of the perfect Attributes of God demonstrated in the Person of Jesus Christ.

So if anyone is to be a leader spiritually- a godly leader, a leader in the Church- then the objective is to bring other people into Christ's Likeness. And in order to bring people into Christ's Likeness- that is to manifest the very same Virtues that characterize Christ- we must, therefore, set a real living example for what those virtues are. And that's why the standard for leadership in the Church is so high- and it is so high that without the very Power of the Holy Spirit working in your life- no man could ever live up to it because whether you're reading about the standard for an Elder or a Deacon or a Pastor any other leader in the Church, or whether you're reading in **1 Timothy** about the characteristics of a man a God- the Standards are very high because the goal is very high and the cause is very high and the purpose is very high.

So the spiritual goal of all spiritual leadership is Christ's likeness. If we want to lead people to be like Christ who was trustworthy, respectable, unselfish, humble, loving, self-disciplined, self-controlled, loving, obedient, courageous, holy and all of that, if you want to lead people to be like that- then you have to set the pattern and set the example of that like Paul who said, **"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of**

Christ." And that's why the standard for virtue in leadership is so high because the goal is so high.

And so this goes way beyond natural leadership. We applaud great natural leadership of character. I was reading a book this week that said, *"If you want to know the difference in what's happened in British society, ask yourself how a society goes from having Winston Churchill as its hero to having Princess Diana as its hero."* I mean, we applaud human leadership, virtue, character. But in the Church- we're talking about something way beyond that.

Let me show you the great contrast. *Natural* leadership out in the world is characterized by self-confidence, but *spiritual* leadership is characterized by a humble confidence in God with absolutely no confidence in ourselves. So this is really just the opposite. Being self-confident in business is a virtue, but being self-confident in the Lord is a real problem and a hindrance because it is sin.

In *natural* leadership- we look for somebody who knows people. But in *Spiritual* leadership- we look for somebody who knows God. In *natural* leadership- we want somebody who makes his *own* decisions, while in *spiritual* leadership- we want somebody who seeks to know the Will of God. In *natural* leadership- we want somebody who is personally ambitious- who's driven. But in *spiritual* leadership- we want somebody whose only desire in life is that God be glorified. In *natural* leadership- we want somebody who originates his *own* plans, who goes his *own* way, who devises his *own* methods- and we call that man an original thinker and an entrepreneur.

But in *spiritual* leadership- we want somebody who conforms to the Image of Christ, who studies and who understands the Word of God, and who obeys it himself. In the Church we want men who, on a personal level, do *not* seek to reinvent the wheel or to repackage the Gospel or to find some new take on Divine Revelation. We do *not* want our spiritual leaders to be entrepreneurs, but we look for men who consistently struggle against the lusts of their own flesh so that he may humbly submit himself to the authority of Scripture. In other words- in the Church- we do not seek some "new thing", we do not seek to try to catch some "new wave" of the "move of God", we are not chasing the prophetic anointing so we can reinvent the Bible- but we want the men who lead us in God to be men who are earnestly contending for the very same Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

In *natural* leadership- we want somebody who enjoys *commanding* other people. But in *spiritual* leadership- we want somebody who enjoys *serving* other people. In *natural* leadership- we want somebody motivated by *personal* considerations- we applaud those who are motivated by money and by success and by power and by fame. But in *spiritual* leadership- it is so critical that we have leaders who are motivated by the Love of God and who run away from personal recognition or attention because he is frightened to death that the attention given to him robs God of the Glory that is due only to Him.

In *natural* leadership- we want somebody who is completely *independent* and who does his own thing and sets his own course. But in *spiritual* leadership- we want somebody who is completely *dependent* on God and who follows the Lamb wherever He goes.

So this is quite a difference, right? So what I'm talking to you about here today is not anything about natural leadership, and we have to resist the temptation to make the Church of Jesus Christ to be like a man-made corporation and the Pastor as the CEO.

We must remember that we who are in ministry are not Professionals. We are not the lofty elite who are carried on the backs of God's people and who are the focus of the attention. We who lead in the Church like Peter must learn the beauty of a life of self-denial and the glory of giving ourselves to the people we are called to lead.

And we must remember that the God of the Bible said that He was a jealous God, and this God manifestly loves His Own Glory- so we must be about preaching and teaching the Glory of God and not the Glory of Man.

There is a song that has gained great respectability in the modern Church in recent years and all the major players of the Christian Music industry have rushed out to make their own version of this song. But this is a very puzzling song to me. It is a very emotional and powerful song and it has the effect of moving people to tears- but Biblically speaking- it makes absolutely no sense at all to me. The main chorus goes like this:

You raise me up so I can walk on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be

And we need to acknowledge that part of the reason why this song has taken the modern Church by storm is because it feeds into the basic Humanistic notion that something is good and spiritual as long as it makes much of Man, as long as it elevates Man above where he is- and that is the criteria by which we judge something to be good or of God.

But the Bible doesn't teach that I am strong when I stand on God's Shoulders, and the Scriptures do not say that I am strong when I stand on Jesus' Shoulders. The infallible and inspired Word of the living God says that I am strong when I am broken and when I am humbled down at His Feet, and when I am decreased and brought low; I am strong when the staff of my pride is broken and when the horror of my own human arrogance suffers great damage, and when I, by God's Grace, am given the honor and privilege of trembling at God's Word.

I am strong when I no longer feel powerful in my own importance and when I become less than nothing, and I am Biblically strong when my mind and my heart and my ambition and my dreams and my calling and my mouth is filled with the Glory of God because we need to know that the God that we serve and the God that we talk so much about is very passionate about His Own Glory, and so those who lead in the Christian Church must be about exalting and magnifying God and not Man. And Jesus brought Peter through everything he needed so that Peter could preach and teach about the Glory of God. And if you are called to lead in the Church- God will bring you through whatever it takes so that you will be literally consumed with a passion about the Glory of God.

Peter lived and preached about Justification by Faith Alone, and so should we. Peter abhorred any teaching that elevated basic human goodness as a means of Salvation or favor with God and so should we. Peter was a man of prayer and so should we be. Peter warned us of having relics and religious trinkets and of putting faith in sacred substitutes, and we must be faithful to do the same.

A study of Peter's Epistles shows us that this man fought for life and he fought for joy and he valued the Scriptures, and he taught us to study them and to ask questions about the Scriptures so we would know them. Please turn with me to **2 Peter 1:16-21:**

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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”—

¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ So we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation,

²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Now I want you to notice two things here in verses 16 and 18. In these two verses- Peter is putting great emphasis on what he saw with his own natural eyes in verse 16 and what he heard with his own natural ears in verse 18. Peter literally saw Jesus transfigured before his eyes on the Mountain, and Peter and James and John all saw Moses and Elijah who had both been dead for many centuries standing with Jesus.

And Peter is telling us here in verses 16 and 18 that what he saw and what he heard had great meaning. And if Peter would have stopped right there then we would be correct to say that what you see with your own eyes and what you hear with your own ears is so sure and so true and so powerful that it should be the basis of our faith and the basis of what we believe and the basis of what we teach.

These two things- what Peter *saw* and what Peter *heard* are his own personal experiences, and it is these kinds of personal experiences that people put so much attention on in our day. It is common to hear people in the modern Church say things like, “*The Lord told me this*”, or “*The Lord showed me this*”, or “*The Spirit revealed this to me*”, or “*God said...*”, or something to that effect, and many of them use these very words right here that Peter wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to verify that believers are supposed to have these very same personal experiences in our day.

And it is true that the Apostle Peter did place great emphasis on his own personal experiences- even as Paul did. But Peter didn't stop there and he then wrote verse 19, and so I beg you to now read with me verse 19 that says:

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 have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Now Peter says here that, “***So we have***”, or in addition to the things which I heard with my own ears and in addition to the things which I saw with my own eyes- in addition to my own personal experiences- we who believe also have something else on which to base what we believe and what we teach and what we trust in. And what is that other thing that we have? Peter calls it “***the prophetic word***” and Peter calls this “***prophetic word***” “***made more sure***”. The English Standard Version renders this as:

... we have something more sure, the prophetic word...

Now the word that was translated here into English as “sure” is the Greek word *bebeaios*, which means: *something that is certain; firm or stable*. And now also please notice that Peter uses a modifier here right before the word “sure”, which is the word “more”.

So Peter is telling us here in verse 19 that as great and as powerful as our own personal experiences are, as overwhelming as what we see with our own eyes and what we hear with our own ears may be- there is something else that exists that is even *more* stable and it is *more* firm and it is *more* certain and it is *more* sure or trustworthy than *anything* and *everything* that we see with our own eyes and that we hear with our own ears.

This other thing is more stable than what we feel inside us and it is more certain than what we think and more reliable than what we believe. This thing is rock solid and it is trustworthy and it is stable and certain and firm and unmovable and unchangeable.

And Peter calls this other thing that is much more sure than anything that we see with our own eyes and anything that we hear with our own ears the “**prophetic word**”.

And many people latch on to that phrase to mean those individual utterances that people give in Church services all over the country. But that is not what Peter is referring to here at all, and the reason we know that is true is because of the next two verses that go on to say:

²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter of one's own interpretation*,

²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

So by these two verses we now know that Peter was referring his readers to the Scriptures themselves and *not* to those individual utterances that people give. And Peter calls the Scriptures themselves “**prophecy**” in verses 20 and 21 - showing that these inspired Words of Scripture did not have human origination but are the product of Divine Authorship.

And so what Peter is teaching us here is that the Words of Scripture are more sure, they are more certain, they are more firm, and they are more reliable and more trustworthy than anything that we see with our own eyes and anything that we hear with our own ears- including seeing Jesus transfigured before our eyes and including hearing God's audible Voice speak from Heaven.

You see, dear friends, because of our sin- we are very gullible people and we are easily led astray. That is why people get fooled by slick salesmen all the time. And Jesus knew this and so Jesus Himself called us sheep. And you can argue with me about this till the cow comes home- but the fact of the matter is that the 2,000 year history of the Christian Church is a history of one generation after the other falling prey to real bad teaching and real bad theology and real bad twisting of the scriptures and of real bad people using personal experiences and private interpretations and dreams and visions and supernatural manifestations and lying signs and wonders that have destroyed people all through the years.

And so the Apostle Peter says that God provided a way where we would know and so we wouldn't have to guess or wonder or be confused,

and God revealed everything that He wanted to reveal about both life and godliness and He put that Revelation into 66 Books and the Scriptures- the Word of God, the Word of Prophecy are more sure and more certain and more stable and more reliable and more steadfast and more trustworthy than anything else on the earth.

But how did this dumb fisherman who had no formal religious education get to a place where he talked and wrote like this? It was through all the things- both good and bad that Jesus brought Peter through. So there is no doubt that to be a leader for the Lord requires some natural raw material that God puts in you at birth. And Peter had that in abundance- but there's a whole lot of very serious work that Peter needed to shape that raw talent into spiritual leadership and that work comes through experience and it comes through the development of his character.

So I pray you can see that character is more critical in spiritual leadership than anywhere else. It's critical anywhere- but it's even more critical in spiritual leadership because the goal of all spiritual leadership is Christ's Likeness, and if you're ever going to move people toward being like Christ- then you have to have establish a pattern for them to follow. And Peter was such a man- a very human man- that we can look at and watch. Now please turn with me to **Hebrews 13:7**:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

Now we can see from this verse that the man who was used by God to write the Book of **Hebrews** really believed in the importance of heroes and models and biography. In fact, that is what Chapter 11 of **Hebrews** is all about- real life people who actually lived in this world and who walked faithfully in faith.

So we should not only remember that we have an altar where we can find Grace every day- but we should also remember the real people who actually trusted in that Grace and who loved us and who spoke to us the Word of God. **Hebrews 13:7** says for us to remember them.

So this verse- probably more than any other verse in the Bible is the foundation for why I read and study Church History. This is the verse that justifies me exposing you to the lives of the Fathers of the Church and biographies of individual men like Peter, and entire groups

of men like the Puritans- so that you can actually do what verse 7 says for you to do and to know them that labored among believers in the church and who led the Church and who actually walked the walk all throughout history.

We who live in the 21st Century need to know that many millions of people for many thousands of years before we were ever born walked and talked with God, and these people were faithful and these people were fruitful, and we can learn much from them. They struggled with pride just like we do, they struggled with covetousness just like we do, they struggled with lust and with war and with financial problems and with fear and with children and with wives and husbands and with bills, and they struggled with life just like we do.

And they won many glorious battles and they lost many terrible defeats, and we can learn from both their victories and their defeats. And we can see how they valued the things of God, and we can see how they valued the Church and the Bible and Divine Truth, and how they loved one another and we can gain much from them.

Truly it is a very self-centered and arrogant man who thinks that his own personal experience with God is the ultimate experience that anyone has ever or will ever have with God. It isn't. For example- I try to read a Puritan sermon every Saturday evening before I finish my study. After I have done my exegesis, after I have done my word studies, after I have gone back to the Greek and Hebrew, after I have prayed and sought God and done my best to put together my sermon which is my worship for God on Sunday- I read a Puritan sermon that has to do with the passage that I am going to speak on that next Lord's day Morning- and I do this for two reasons:

1. Puritan sermons help to humble me and help to slay the staff of my pride by showing me just how shallow I am and how childish I am and how selfish I am and how lukewarm I am.
2. Puritan sermons help to keep me on track so that I know that I am not veering off course.

So remember them, verse 7 says. Know some history - perhaps just your parent's lives, or your grandparents, or a pastor or a missionary, or read a biography of a great believer from the past that

tell the stories of those who were leaders in the Church and who spoke the word of God.

Some of you may wonder why I am constantly trying to get you to read other books beside the Bible. Some have even said that we don't need other books- that all we need to read is the Bible. That is wrong. The truth is that these other books will help us to understand the Bible better.

Look, if you come to this Church for six months or longer- I assure you that you will be in the Bible more and you will understand the Bible better than you ever have. And part and parcel to you understanding this great and Holy Book is by reading and comprehending the other books.

Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Charles Spurgeon, J. Gresham Machen, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, etc. You need to know who these people are and what they taught and how they lived their lives- not just because these people are interesting like a novel or a good mystery or western. But because God said here in **Hebrews 13:7**:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

Specifically God says in verse 7,

"Look at the result or the outcome of their conduct and how they lived their daily lives."

Well, what does that mean? It's not just: Look at their conduct. It's: Look at the outcome, literally, look at the exit of their way of life. I think it means: Look at the whole course of their life- especially the end of it. How did they run? Did they hold fast till the end? Did they finish well? Did they do what this whole letter of **Hebrews** is written to help us do - persevere to the end and be saved?

This is why in some ways dead heroes are more important than living heroes. Living heroes are important- don't get me wrong- but they might cease to be heroes before they die. They might let you down. But men who have already died have finished their course and we know the end of the matter with them.

So the writer of **Hebrews** says here in verse 7:

“Remember”

And that's a word that reaches into the past. Remember those whose conduct you can survey from beginning to end, and consider all of it - especially how it ended.

Why? Why this focus on human leaders who knew and spoke the Word of God? Was it so that you could copy them? No, that's not what the writer says here at all. He says the reason that we should remember them is so that we can **“follow their faith”**- so we can *imitate* their faith. Read again **Hebrews 13:7**:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

Don't follow their conduct because if you try to imitate their conduct- you become a religious fraud- a spiritual counterfeit. This is a frightening reality when you see it - people who have learned the “forms of godliness” and yet know nothing personal of the Power that comes from genuine Faith.

No, the writer doesn't say for us to follow their conduct- instead he says:

“Look at the whole course of their conduct and how they finished their course, and get the same “motor”; the same generating force that made them what they were: their faith.”

And so all true the leaders of the Church must have this as their objective, and that must be the standard by which they live their lives- so that God will be glorified and so that others who come after us will have a real example of faith to follow. Now there are many more things I could say about Peter- but what I want to leave with you is that Peter was such a man, and so as you read what God used this man wrote himself and as you read what others wrote about him like here in Luke- we will see a man who was a vile sinner who was saved by Grace through Faith, and who made many mistakes, but a man who kept the faith and who finished his course and for whom was laid a crown of life and a man whose faith we can follow in our day.

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.