

Sure - He Won't Let You Down

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[0 : 00] The first reading today is to Peter chapter 1. It's on page 1222 in the Bibles and the seats. So page 1222.

2 Peter chapter 1. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance, godliness, and to godliness, mutual affection, and to mutual affection, love.

[1 : 44] For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure, you will always be able to remember these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power.

[2 : 57] But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory saying, This is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Well, good morning again, and it's such a privilege and pleasure to be with you. I'm so pleased that there are Northern Irish musicians up where they are the best in the world, absolutely the best in the world.

You should have a handout in front of you. So for the two sessions, I'll be following this just in case I get lost. You can help me out, and just in case you get lost, and if you've got the Bible up in front of you, why don't we have another prayer as we begin to have a look at this brilliant short letter.

[4 : 28] Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you love us so much that you sent the Lord Jesus to die for us. Thank you that you love us so much that you've given us his words, that we may know him, come to know him, that we may grow in him.

Father, we pray that both those things will be true today. In Jesus' name, amen. If you could determine it now, what would your last words be?

There have been, through time, there have been some very famous last words. Nelson, his last words. Kismet hardy, or kiss me hardy.

Never quite sure what that means, either fate hardy. A bit of debate about that. Oscar Wilde, it's either me or the wallpaper must go. Struck very much yesterday by Tim Keller's last words, there are no downsides for me in death.

Struck, as I said a moment ago, by my father's last words, at least to me, yes, I'm ready to go, I'm ready to die. Last words are important, really important.

[5 : 37] And if you could plan them, what would you say? What would you say to your family? What would you say to your children? What would you say to your neighbors? What would you say if you were a pastor?

Particularly if you were a pastor like Peter was a pastor. What would you say to those who've come to know the Lord Jesus and are growing in the Lord Jesus but facing incredible difficulties?

What would you say? Well, we have these last words of Peter for us. Now, there may have been other last words, but the last words of Peter as he communicates with the Christians in whom he's invested the gospel, in whom he's seen the lives transformed with the saving news of the Lord Jesus.

What are his last words to them? Well, here we have them in 2 Peter, his second letter. This is not written to a specific church in a specific area.

We know it's written to specific Christians, but these Christians could have been anywhere. These are probably, you have a look at the list at the start of 1 Peter, probably the same Christians received this second letter of Peter.

[6 : 47] Peter knew he was going to die. Peter knew that life was ebbing away for him and that death was imminent. So he writes telling them important things.

That's the thing about last words. They're always important. You want to make them important. You want the message, the one thing that you want those who are left behind to know.

Well, that's what we've got here. And these three chapters cover things like, for example, skepticism about salvation. Maybe they were concerned as to whether they were really saved, really confident that Jesus Christ loved them and that they were Jesus Christ's.

They were worried about that. So Peter writes, certainly in the first chapter here, words of assurance, reassurance. Yes, you are. You are Jesus Christ's.

And when your trust and hope is in Jesus, there is nothing to fear. But the second chapter, it changes gears somewhat. But you can tell it flows from the first chapter, not simply because the second chapter comes after the first.

[7 : 56] But the ideas started in chapter one are picked up in chapter two because there's a threat to that confidence. The threat to that confidence that Jesus Christ has rescued them, that their trust perhaps is misplaced because false teachers have come, have come and begun to influence, have said things like, well, you know, see that Jesus that you believed in, that word from the Bible, that word of Peter, see that stuff.

Well, have you not thought about this? Perhaps what Peter said is not full, is not complete, is not entirely true. Maybe you need to. False teachers.

So he deals with that in chapter two. But then as he's looking towards his own death, where does he draw them? Well, he draws them to look towards the return of Jesus Christ, Christ's second coming.

That Jesus Christ is going to come back again someday. That the world simply will not trundle on and trundle on and keep going and keep going and keep going. But that there will be an end. And that end will be when Jesus Christ comes back again. We're in the last days. And those last days will conclude. Hence, last days.

[9 : 18] So that's chapter three. We're going to look at that tomorrow morning in church here, I guess. So let's have a look at what's going on in the first chapter. I said earlier on, this is about being reassured that your confidence is not misplaced.

That you are rescued, truly rescued. That God has done everything necessary for you. And you see verse one and two. He begins right away in giving them, those who receive this letter, those who first read this letter, reassurance.

Listen, verse one. This is Simon Peter. Same Simon Peter wrote, first Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. Now whenever you hear that, you think, oh yeah, I would like to be like him.

He had access to Jesus. He was with Jesus. Even though he denied Jesus, he knew restoration by Jesus. He was the one that said, you are the Christ, you are the Messiah.

And then Jesus said to him, get behind me, Satan. He knew an apostle, a servant, yes, but even greater, so we think, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

[10:29] Maybe you want to be like that. Well, Peter says that if you are a Christian, you are like that. Obviously, Peter, you know, is an apostle, an eyewitness, one who speaks authoritatively for Jesus.

But he says this, if you know Jesus, you have the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. You've received a faith as precious as ours, equal standing as ours.

I'm no more special than you. I may have had privileged access, if you like, to Jesus, but you have in terms of God's work in your life, in terms of your salvation, you have as much as I have.

I think this is great, that Peter is not more saved than me, that Peter is not more rescued than me. And if you're a Christian, that's true for you.

Verse 2, grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. So listen where this righteousness begins in our lives.

[11:46] Well, it starts with God. It starts in rescue. It starts with his, verse 3, divine power. His divine power has given us everything we need.

Not some things. Notice that. Notice the sufficiency of God's work. God's power. He has done enough.

There's nothing left to do. His divine power has given us everything. Not some things, but everything we need for a godly life.

through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. It's that list of those recipients of this first letter.

Hear him say in his second letter, you have everything. There's no need to doubt. There's no need to fear. There's no need to look under the carpet in case there's something under there that you've missed.

[12:47] There's nothing more that you need. And this is brilliant reassurance for us, isn't it? That God's rescue of us is sufficient and efficient. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life.

Well, of course, being rescued by God, we have his righteousness. righteousness. But that has an impact. That changes our daily lives.

This is not just a philosophy that exists out there. This is theology that turns us upside down, inside out. It changes us. So the person that you were before you became a Christian is not the person you are now.

At times, we wonder. At times, we think to ourselves, well, am I really a Christian? He gives some markers here as to work out just exactly what is happening in terms of God's righteousness, in terms of his rescue in our lives.

He gives us some markers so that we may know for sure that we have been rescued. Of course, all of this is from his divine power, which has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

[14:09] Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises. What are those promises? What it is that we're loved? The son of God who loved me, Paul says, not Peter, Paul says, the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Jesus who says, if you come to me, I will in no way, no wise, cast you away. Those great and precious promises.

I'm going to prepare a place for you. Jesus speaks. Promise. We've got these great and precious promises so that, verse 4, through them you may participate in the divine nature.

Now, of course, in verse 3, he's mentioned divine power. So he raises this whole thing higher.

Every time we hear that, we look beyond ourselves and we think, wow, God's divine power.

This is big stuff. His divine power leads to what? Participation in the divine nature. Verse 4, you see that? His great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.

[15:24] Does that mean we become little gods? gods? No. Not of essence, but of quality.

Our relationship with the true and the living God so that with Christ we are able to call God Father. You may participate in the divine nature having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil

desires.

See where evil comes from? Is it circumstances? Is it economic situation? Economic stability? Well, look, the corruption in the world comes from where? Us. See where it comes from? We look around and we think, my goodness.

You and I are benefactors and beneficiaries of this. We contribute to it. But this divine power, this divine rescue enables us not to go the way of the world.

[16:38] So, that's God's rescue of us. He sets before us, doesn't he, the dignity of heaven as we look at the world around us and makes us yearn for that place that Tim Keller is enjoying, that my father is enjoying.

So, how are we to respond? Well, verse 5 through to 11. Let's respond like this. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, to goodness, knowledge, to knowledge, self-control, to self-control, perseverance, to perseverance, godliness, and to godliness, mutual affection, and a mutual affection, love.

He's telling us to grow in Christ. And our growth in Christ will look like this. Do you see, there's faith, it's the first thing that's mentioned, then it moves towards love.

Faith, and that list, faith, how's the list go? Faith, goodness, goodness, knowledge. It's almost, he deals with an internal aspect, which flows out into an external aspect.

Faith, goodness, that's the quality of our relationships. Moral goodness, goodness, knowledge, so that we're able to act prudently as we know the will and the ways of God.

[18:05] to knowledge. See, this is brilliant, isn't it? Because knowledge, it's great, having knowledge, knowing lots of stuff, but look at what we're to add to knowledge.

We may grow our minds, but we're to add self-control. It's a very different way of looking at university life, isn't it?

To knowledge, self-control. To self-control. Perseverance. Keeping going. My son, yesterday, I was in London Wednesday, Thursday, flew home Thursday night for my son's very last sports day.

Yes, so I've had five children and that's the end of my sports day. Attendance, at least obligatory attendance. Tom, unfortunately, didn't qualify for the sprint race he did last year and the year before and this year he was really annoyed that he didn't and he was really grumpy for about seven months at field.

But he was in the relay and the 400 meters, right? more of a sprinter, kind of the body of a sprinter like me, obviously.

[19:27] All right. So, just watching him going around the track and the track is the Mary Peters track. If you've heard of Mary Peters, she won gold. There's quite a few people from Belfast here, so you know what I'm talking about.

It's quite high, prolific. The school spends a fortune in getting the kids up to their kind of aspiration, aspiration. And he's running around and running around and running around and they began to slow down, right?

But I couldn't get at him, right? So, I was on this side of the track. He was running around the far side of the track and my wife and I were, I'll not show you the video, it's a bit embarrassing because I was holding up the phone like this.

I started, come on, Tom, faster, Tom, faster, faster, keep going because he was slowing down. He hadn't worked out the perseverance is the thing that's different about long distance than short distance.

I mean, he was good at that kind of taking off, woo, like that, right? But then he realized he had to stay, woo, he had to stay at that level for more than 100 meters. And so, he slowed down and slowed down and slowed down and slowed down and then he came, I don't know what he came, like a hundredth in about 40 places, I don't know.

[20:35] He just slowed down but perseverance was the lesson that he had to learn, keeping going, keeping going to the end and this is where effort, our effort is concerned and this is where God's divine power is working within us to keep us going.

Perseverance. Perseverance heading towards the end, towards the finishing line. What do we add to that? Godliness. He works from the inside towards the outside.

Perseverance, godliness. To godliness, mutual affection. There's a big one for us gathered here. You think to yourself, well, how am I with that other person on the other side of the row here, the center here, the aisle here?

How am I with them? How's godly affection, mutual affection, one with the other, brothers and sisters in the church family, how is that going? Do we honestly love one another so that those around us will see the transformation that knowing Christ brings? And that then extends beyond the church, I guess, goes bigger, love. See the way he moves? Faith to love. Inside and outside characteristics, qualities.

[21 : 54] Your rector wrote a book called Naked God, which I've sold and handed out many copies of. Thank you very much, Martin.

I don't think Peter envisages naked faith. I don't think he sees that faith doesn't have clothes. That there needs to be something distinctive, something seen by those who profess to have faith, those indeed who know that they've got faith, so that their knowledge is made even more secure. Verse 8, for if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's knowing Christ means a change in our lives. Knowing Christ means fruitfulness in our lives. Christ said this kind of thing, didn't he?

[22 : 53] not ineffective in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, but whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind. Short-sighted so that you can't even see what's right in front of you or you can, but you can't see what's beyond that so that you kind of forget all that you look at is this thing, blind, short-sightedness.

You can't look beyond to see what Christ has done. what God has given. Forgetting, you see, verse 9, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling election, for you do these things, you will never stumble and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Note the quality of the welcome, a rich welcome. Come in. I've been waiting for you. A rich welcome.

But where does this start? How do we know? 2 Peter is concerned with knowledge, growth, and both character, godliness, and knowledge.

[24 : 10] Sometimes, our broader circles aren't terribly interested in the knowledge of Christ. You mean, Bible study? Are you really asking me to come along and sit for 20 or 30 minutes on a Sunday morning to get stuck into a book of the Bible?

We're going through the book of Revelation with our student-y type congregation on Sunday evening. And they come along and they get a 30-minute sermon and they get stuck into like an hour-long Bible study and a Wednesday evening following up the same passage. And talking to people about that, they kind of say, well, people are trying to invite and come along and say, well, that sounds boring. That sounds boring. I'd much rather, I'd much rather be doing something as if that is not something.

That is working hard and growing in one's knowledge, one's knowledge of Christ. But where does it begin? And how are we sure?

How certain is it what we've been given? You'll notice that, as I said at the start, the very skeptics who've come in, scoffers rather, sorry, who've come in in chapter 3 alongside the false teachers of chapter 2 where their confidence, those who receive this letter, being undermined, chipped away, the foundations being questioned.

[25 : 32] I guess yours would be as well, your confidence in Christ, your confidence of all of these things would be taken away from you if people started to question, for example, can we really trust the Bible?

Can we really trust it? For a long time in scholarship, 2 Peter was not really kind of a book of interest to the scholars. 2 Peter may not be a big book of interest to the churches, maybe because of the scholars saying, well, we can't really trust this.

Simon Peter probably isn't the author of this. You know, it's got different Greek, for example, from 1 Peter. It doesn't sound like 1 Peter. It doesn't really sound like Peter. Therefore, it's not Peter. It's not authentic. It's just one of these. So for a long time, it's just been ignored. Also, for a long time, maybe it's a bit, some will say, a bit harsh. The description of the false teachers in the next session we'll be looking at.

It's a bit harsh and a bit hard and a bit too challenging, too confronting. Perhaps we don't like that. And for a while, this has been ignored. In churches, in scholarship. Peter is very aware that these

are the potential things for God's people while they're traveling with Christ on earth.

[26 : 58] So he says, verse 12, I'll keep reminding you of this. Even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have, we need to be, we need to be bolstered.

Always bolstered. Always reminded. So that we can keep going. And he brings us right back. In this little section, he brings us right back because he tells us that what they have heard has not been made up by him.

So I will always remind you of these things even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body.

See how he knows he's heading towards Christ? This tent of the body. Paul uses similar language. Because I know that I'll soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus Christ has made it clear to me.

Christ has told him. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. In other words, I will make sure you get this.

[27 : 59] I'll make sure you'll get what I've penned to you because what I've penned to you is the truth. Continue in your confidence that what you believe is true. Even though there will be those who oppose you, there will be those who oppose you from outside of the church, in culture, on question time, for example.

There will be those who oppose you inside the church. Chapter 2 deals with those within the church. I'll make every effort to see it after my departure you will always be able to remember these things for we did not follow cleverly devised stories when I told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power.

Maybe you've been confronted with that. You've tried a witness to someone and they say to you, you've made that up or it's been made up and you've been brainwashed or you're a Christian simply because you've grown up in a Christian culture, Christian home.

You've been brainwashed. It's all not true. How can you trust that? Well, Peter tells us here is the reason that he believes it so that you and I can believe it.

Nothing cleverly devised about it didn't come from him when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ because he saw it. We were, see this, verse 16, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty so we stand on his shoulders.

[29 : 25] We stand on the fact that Peter saw. In this instance, the transfigured Jesus, this is the instance that he's referring to. Matthew chapter 17, verse 1 to 9.

The transfiguration where Jesus shone. Not a light shining on Jesus, but where Jesus shone in great glory with Moses and Elijah.

They didn't totally understand that those who were there, those eyewitnesses, and notice plural, eyewitnesses, didn't totally understand what was going on. But they heard God explain it to them. We were, see this, verse 16, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory saying, this is my son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. earlier on today, early on today, Martin killed a lion.

[30 : 37] Seriously, he killed a lion. He did? With bare hands? Killed a lion? I saw it? Now do you believe me? Well, Martin could, of course.

I mean, look at him. He's fearless, absolutely fearless. Well, what if me and Martin's wife, well, maybe not Martin's wife, or maybe one of the sensible people that you would trust in the church, or maybe two of us, maybe three of us, I don't know why you trust me, but what if people you trust or others saw this?

You'd be more inclined to believe it, wouldn't you? Someone said no there, I think. You'd be more inclined to believe it if there was a plurality of those who saw it.

More than just one eyewitness, at least one person claiming it. Well, Peter tells us, not just me, we saw it. It was Peter, James, and John.

We, plural, we saw it. This is not the singular Joseph Smith who met the angel Moroni and founded Mormonism, or Muhammad who received.

[31 : 51] This is not a singular witness. It's a multiple witness. He saw it. He heard, this is my son.

He saw it. So you, recipients of this letter, you readers of this letter, you believers, in the same message, you can trust this.

It's not just Peter having an elucidation or spinning a story. Multiple eyewitnesses. We saw it. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. Notice the language, the sacred mountain. What does it remind you of from the Old Testament? Moses on a sacred mountain, receiving from God, God's law. the sacred mountain. We. So as if that's not enough to persuade you, to convince you, he has even more.

[32 : 54] This chapter builds to a crescendo. It gets louder and louder and louder. And we've come to a big loud point here where we know that this is true because it's been heard and seen.

and we have something else. The prophetic message is something completely reliable and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation, God's revelation, God's word, heard and seen. And to bolster their confidence in the witness, the apostolic witness that all of this is true and therefore witness and confidence that they're on the right path.

It's there in the Bible. The written scriptures, written and reliable, the prophetic message. All confirmed, of course, as Jesus, the promised one, Jesus, the Messiah, the one who's God's glory, the one about whom was spoken, those words from God, this is my son in whom I will plead.

[34 : 21] Listen to him, remember that? We have the prophetic words, something completely reliable because it makes those words of the prophets absolutely true.

Of course they were. Of course they were true. Of course they were trustworthy. But now, we know even more that they are, even more so. Verse 20, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophets' own interpretation of things.

the words, the words didn't originate with those prophets. This is not a man-made thing.

This is not from human beings. This is from God. And we have the mechanism in verse 21 being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

we can have confidence that what we know to be true is true. We can have confidence that what we have trusted is true.

[35 : 30] And as the false teachers of chapter 2 come and do their hardest, their biggest, their biggest effort to undermine God's people, we know that what is in this book is true.

Where the scoffers of chapter 3 come and say, how can you believe this stuff? There's no real evidence of the return of Jesus Christ. Yeah, he may have said it, but like, where is he?

As they do their work, as they seek to undercut and cause us to doubt, we know for certain that what is here is true.

that's a good place to begin, isn't it? That's a good place to begin in our confidence about Christ's salvation of us. Good place to begin when it comes to our confidence as we reach this world that needs to know, desperately know the Lord Jesus.

So, God has spoken. We know it. He has rescued us. He's given us everything we need. We build on that not to increase our salvation, but as we know Christ more, as we serve Christ more, as we live godly lives, we will be reassured of His work in us.

[36 : 57] And we know this to be true because it's not based on rumors. It's not fables. It's not fairy tale. We know. We know. We have seen.

We have heard. We have read that this is true. What a good place to start. We can have courage. We can have confidence knowing that the matter is certain.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank You for sending us the Lord Jesus. Thank You for what He's done for us on the cross, that He willingly bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we're made right with Christ.

We're made right with the true and the living God when our trust is in Christ. Thank You that we have nothing to fear. Thank You that You work in us.

Lord, we pray that there would be clear evidence of that. There would be no naked faith that would be clothed with godliness, with love, this mutual affection that He speaks about here.

[38 : 11] Father, You pray that these things would increase and increase and increase in us until the day that we see Him. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.