

December 7, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Our Firm Faith

2 Peter 1:16-19

1. Not a Fairy Tale (verse 16a).
2. Based on Eyewitnesses (verses 16b-18).
3. Based on Scripture (verse 19).

This morning is December 7, 2008. On this date, 67 years ago, it was a Sunday morning, just like today in Hawaii. Many who worked at the military base in Pearl Harbor were enjoying a typical relaxing Sunday at home with their families. Many of them were at home eating breakfast. Some of them were on their way to church. Some were looking forward to enjoying a picnic later that afternoon. Small projects at home were on the agenda. Little did they know that they were about to be massively attacked by the Japanese. This attack had been long in the works.

A week and a half beforehand, on November 26, 1941, the day before Thanksgiving, the Japanese sent a fleet of six aircraft carriers carrying more than 350 war planes in all on a trip to Pearl Harbor to deal a "mortal blow" to the U. S. fleet in the Pacific. Along with the aircraft carriers were two battleships and a few other envoys. Fortunately for the Japanese, "heavy clouds obscured the ships' movements for nearly the entire journey" and they went completely undetected. Early in the morning of December 7th, "squadrons of bomber and fighter planes" headed off to Hawaii to carry out the attacks. As the Japanese pilots descended upon Pearl Harbor, they were pleased to see "eight battleships--the Pacific fleet's big guns--anchored like sitting ducks. The Japanese pilots went into a bombing frenzy," crippling the American fleet. Just when the American "navy crews thought they had taken all that the Japanese could send them, another wave of planes attacked. Airfield and bases were slammed by bombs. Army fighter planes, parked in neat rows, were smashed and burned before they could take off."

[\[1\]](#)

More than 2,400 people died in these attacks. Our nation was enraged. Those actions brought America into World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt appeared before the congress the next day and delivered a speech in which he asked the congress to declare war against Japan. He began that speech with these words, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan."

Ever since that day, December 7th has held a special place in the heart of many Americans. It has reminded us of how fragile our security is. It has stirred up our love for our own country. It has given us a cause to fight for our freedom.

Of course, there is another event in the course of human history that we ought always to remember as well. This event didn't happen 67 years ago. This event happened 2000 years ago, when Jesus Christ was brutally murdered upon a cross in Jerusalem. There are some parallels with these two events.

When President Roosevelt addressed the congress on the day after the attack, he said, "It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace." [\[2\]](#)

In a similar fashion, the attack upon Jesus had been planned for quite some time. In fact, a few days before He was crucified, there was a meeting of the chief priests and the elders of the people in which they "plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him" (Matt. 26:3-4). They found their in with Judas, who was "looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus" (Matt. 26:16). When the time came, they gathered together "a large crowd with swords and clubs" to arrest Jesus (Matt. 26:47). Jesus confronted them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets" (Matt. 26:55-56).

In speaking with congress, President Roosevelt described Pearl Harbor as an "unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan." [\[3\]](#) So also was the attack upon Jesus Christ. They proceeded to hold an illegal trial at night in which they tried hard to gather witnesses against Jesus, but many of those witnesses contradicted themselves (Matt. 26:59-60). Finally, it took the words of Jesus telling them that a day would come in which they would "see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). This was too much for the religious leaders. They sent Jesus off to Pilate to be crucified. Although Pilate found Jesus to be innocent, it was only because of political pressure that Jesus was taken away and crucified. Roman soldiers stripped Him (Matt. 27:28). They mocked Him (Matt. 27:29). They spat on Him and beat Him on the head (Matt. 27:30). They nailed Him to a cross and lifted Him up to die (Matt. 27:35). And even as He was dying, He was mocked upon the cross (Matt. 27:38-44). It was an unjust death. It was a cruel death. He had done nothing worthy of death.

And just as the United States also finally conquered Japan by dropping atom bombs on Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945), so also did Jesus finally conquer. He conquered by conquering death. After he had died, they laid Him in a tomb (Matt. 27:57-61). After the Sabbath, several women came to anoint the body, but they found the tomb empty (Matt. 28:1-7). Instead, they encountered an angel, who said to them, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He is risen,

just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that he has risen from the dead" (Matt. 28:5-7). After that, Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples, "speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3), appearing to more than 500 people as proof that He had risen from the dead (1 Cor. 15:6). He then ascended into heaven and sent the Spirit to the church. And the church scattered and proclaimed the message of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins ... to all nations" (Luke 24:47). The reason why we are here today is because of what Jesus did 2,000 years ago.

Just as we remember the events that took place at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, so also are we called to remember the events in the life of Jesus that took place 2000 years ago. This was my message two weeks ago when we looked at 2 Peter, which was entitled, "You Need Reminding." In verses 12-15, Peter writes, ...

2 Peter 1:12-15

Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

The events that took place in Jerusalem so long ago are every bit as historical as are the attack on Pearl Harbor. In other words, our faith is grounded in the facts of history.

We aren't followers of some big, great idea that will help the world. We aren't followers of a certain philosophy. We aren't followers of an intriguing story. We aren't followers of some code of conduct as the key to spirituality. Rather, we are following a man, who was born, who lived, who taught, and who died in space, time and history. Now, this man was unlike anyone else, because he was the God-man, Jesus Christ. And his birth was like no one else -- He was born of a virgin. His life was like no one else -- He lived sinlessly. His teaching was like no one else -- He spoke the very words of God. His death was like no one else -- His death was a substitutionary sacrifice. And, of course, His resurrection was like no one else -- He was raised from the dead, never to die again, having conquered death itself.

Now, it's not that we don't have an idea that we follow, because we do. We boast in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14). It's not like we don't have a philosophy to follow, because we do. We follow the Savior who died for us (1 Pet. 3:18). It's not like we don't have a story, because we do. Our story is the one of Jesus, the light, who was hated by the darkness (John 3:19). It's not like we don't have a code of conduct we follow, because we do. The royal law of love (James 2:8). But, all of these things are grounded in history. They aren't made up. They aren't accepted for some pragmatic reason -- as if they give people a better life. On the contrary, we believe these things and we follow these things because of what has taken place in the history of the world. Our faith is firm because it is rooted and grounded in the facts of history.

And in our text of Scripture this morning, Peter will show us how firm our faith is.

2 Peter 1:16-1

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"--and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

My message this morning is entitled, "Our Firm Faith." In these words, Peter gives three lines of reasoning as to why our faith is firm. First of all, our faith is firm because our faith is ...

1. Not a Fairy Tale (verse 16a).

This is what Peter says, "we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, Peter was saying, "Our faith isn't come concocted story that some really smart person made up. Rather, our faith is grounded in the truth."

The Greek text here literally reads, "we did not follow sophisticated myths." It's true. As we gather each Sunday morning to worship our Lord. We aren't following myths. We aren't following fairy tales. Fairy tales have their place. They are nice. They are delightful. They are fun. They make us smile. And may times, fairy tales have a good lesson to teach us.

We learn all sorts of things by these made up stories which have been told from generation to generation.

The story of Pinocchio teaches us to tell the truth.

The Three Little Pigs teach us of the need to have a strong foundation in life.

The Beauty and the Beast teaches us to look for beauty beyond external appearances.

The Gingerbread Man teaches us that you can't run and hide forever.

Little Red Riding Hood teaches us to be careful of our friends.

The story of the Pied Piper teaches us not to follow anyone who comes along our paths.

Stone Soup teaches us how gullible people can be.

The Wizard of Oz teaches us to value our friends and our homes, which are better than an enchanted land, "There's no place like home!"

Cinderella gives us hope of someday living in the castle ourselves.

But, our faith isn't a fairy tale. Our faith is grounded in reality. Our faith is grounded in history. That's Peter's point. He said, "We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 16).

There are many in this world who believe that Christianity is a fairy tale. Karl Marx once said, "Religion is the opiate of the people." In other words, Marx believed that people used religion to dull the pain of this world and gain happiness in something outside of this world. He called religion to be "illusions." But, Marx couldn't be more wrong about the Christian faith. It's not an illusion. It's not a fairy tale. It is truth that is grounded upon the truth of history.

With these words, Peter is beginning to pave the way in his response to the false teachers who were infiltrating the churches throughout the scattered regions of Asia minor. In fact, the presence of these false teachers is the major burden of Peter' writing these things. All of chapter 2 will be devoted to dealing with the false teachers of his day. The first half of chapter 3 will be devoted to it as well.

Peter writes, "False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies." These false teachers taught false things. They taught, "destructive heresies." Furthermore, these false teachers weren't straightforward about their teaching. Rather, they were secretive about it. Listen, anytime that people are secretive about what they believe and teach, there is cause for concern. Why are they secretive, but that they have another agenda.

As I have told you before, chapter 2 contains little about their teaching. In fact, the only thing that we know about the content of their teaching from chapter 2 comes right here in this first verse. These heresies were "destructive" (verse 1). These heresies were a denial of Christ (verse 1). However, we do get a sense of their teaching in chapter 3, verses 3 and 4, "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

Here we see Peter repeating for us the accusation that is coming out of the lips of these false teachers. They are denying the second coming of Christ. They are doing it by saying that everything has been the same since the beginning of creation. They are saying that there is no good reason to anticipate the coming again of Jesus to this earth. As far as they are concerned, the return of Christ simply isn't going to happen. Fundamentally, these false teachers were attacking the return of Jesus Christ. And that's the very point that Jesus is making here in verse 16, "We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

At first glance, you might tend to think that Peter is talking here about Christmas, when Jesus "came" to the earth. Now, it's true that Jesus came to earth (John 1:14). It's true that He was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:21). It's true that He lived a sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21). It's true that He died as a ransom for our sins (Mark 10:45). And our minds are upon this during the Christmas season, the coming of Jesus into this world. But I don't believe that Peter is talking here about Christmas. When Peter talks about the "coming" of Christ, he's making a specific reference to the second coming of Christ.

Look once again carefully at chapter 3, verse 4. Peter uses this word, "coming" to describe the second coming of Jesus, not the first. The mockers were saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" A few verses later, Peter uses the same word to describe again the second coming, "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." Again, this word, "coming" has reference to the second coming of Christ.

If you know enough Greek to be dangerous, you might recognize the Greek word that Peter uses here. He uses the word, *parousia* (*parousia*), which is a technical term used more than 15 times to refer to the second coming of Christ. Throughout the entire Bible, it's never used of the first coming of Jesus. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that it couldn't refer the incarnation of Jesus Christ in this verse, as describing the time when Jesus came among us as a baby. But, there are other clues that give us reason to believe that Peter is referencing the second coming and not the first.

The first of which is that Peter describes the coming of Christ to be with "power." When you think about the first coming of Christ, you might easily think of it in terms of "power." His teaching was authoritative (Matt. 7:28-29). His dealing with the religious leaders of the day was bold (Matthew 23). He obviously possessed great healing power. He cleansed the lepers (Luke 17:11-19). He gave sight to the blind (Matt. 20:29-34; John 9). He gave power to the paralytic, who came on stretcher and left carrying his stretcher (Matt. 9:1-8). He brought up Lazarus from the grave (John 11). When the woman touched his garment in the crowd, Jesus knew that someone touched him, because he said, "I was aware that power had gone out of Me" (Luke 8:46). Jesus had healing power.

Beyond the power of His healing ability, Jesus also had power over the forces of nature. He had the ability to turn water into wine (John 2:1-11). He was able to multiply fish and bread to feed thousands (John 6:1-14). He could walk on water (John 6:15-21). He cried out, "Hush, be still" and the raging Sea of Galilee became perfectly calm (Mark 4:39) When the sea became calm the disciples were very aware of the power of Christ, saying, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:41). So, certainly, in some measure, you might say that His first coming was in "power." But, the power of the first coming pales in comparison with the power of His second coming.

When Peter speaks about the coming of Christ, he says that the "heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). He says that on the "coming of the day of God, ... the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" (2 Peter 3:12). By comparison, this makes the first coming of Jesus look very powerless.

When the United States dropped an atom bomb on Hiroshima, the power was incredible. The bomb exploded about 2,000 feet above the ground. "The heat at the point of detonation was hotter than the surface of the sun. ... A fireball immediately formed, which emitted atomic radiation and searing heat. People close to ground zero were vaporized. Thirteen square miles of landscape was reduced to ashes." [\[4\]](#) More than half of the buildings in the city were destroyed. The immediate death toll approached 100,000 people.

When Jesus comes, it will be more powerful than an atom bomb. A resident of Hiroshima described the attack with these words, "It was as if the sun exploded." ^[6] My friends, when Jesus comes back, the sun will explode! It will "pass away with a roar" (2 Peter 3:10).

When the Bible describes His first coming as the coming of a "lamb," soft and gentle and humble and prepared for slaughter (John 1:29; Isaiah 53). But, the Bible describes His second coming as the coming of a "lion," fierce and ferocious and prepared for victory (Rev. 5:5).

When we think about Christmas, it was a humble coming of Jesus. He was born a baby in a barn stall. He was meek and gentle of heart. He willingly laid down His life. But, His second coming will come with power and majesty. He will come as the warrior on the white horse, with eyes as "a flame of fire" and with the armies in heaven following him and with a sword coming out of His mouth that can strike down nations. (Rev. 19:11-16).

All of these things point us to believe that Peter is focusing his attention upon the second coming of Christ. However, the biggest reason why I believe that Peter is talking about the second coming is because of what Peter says next. He said, ...

2 Peter 1:16b-18

We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"--and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

These verses are talking about the events that took place at the Transfiguration of Jesus. For those who saw and heard the Majestic glory, it was a taste of the coming kingdom, which Christ will establish upon His return (as we shall see in a few moments). These verses form the basis for my second point this morning. Our faith is firm because our faith is ...

2. Based on Eyewitnesses (verses 16b-18).

Peter's main point here in these verses is that he was an eyewitness of the majesty of Jesus Christ. He saw Jesus in a way that few ever had the opportunity to see Jesus. He saw Jesus on the mountain, receiving honor and glory from God, the Father. He saw the glory of Christ as "His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (Mark 9:3). He heard the honor given to Christ when the Father said, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased." This was the divine affirmation of the pleasure of the Father with His Son.

Not only was Peter an eyewitness of these things, he was also an earwitness. This is the point of verse 18, "we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." Peter was one of those who saw Jesus in all His glory with his own eyes ... and heard the voice of God which came from heaven.

Do you remember what took place on the holy mountain? Let's read about what Peter witnessed. The transfiguration is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36). We could look at Matthew's account of this. We could look at Mark's account of this. But, we will look at Luke's given in Luke 9. We will begin in verse 27.

In this verse, Jesus is talking to all of His disciples. He had just given them the high cost of discipleship. And then, he says, "But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27) This is a difficult verse to understand. Jesus was talking to the twelve disciples. And yet, He says, some of you will seek the kingdom of God before you die! Last I checked, all twelve of the disciples to whom Jesus said these things all died long ago. How is it that some of them will taste of the kingdom of God? The clue comes in the next section of Scripture. The transfiguration of Jesus was a taste of the coming kingdom of God. That's why Peter says, "I made known to you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" as a future event.

Look at verse 28, "Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray." Four guys walked up the mountain together. One of them, Jesus, knew that was going to take place. The others, Peter, James and John, didn't quite know what was going on.

We find out in verse 29, "And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming." This is a strange thing that was happening to Jesus. Have you seen someone faint before? Before they faint, their skin lightens and they become pale, as their blood flows from their head into their lower extremities. In some measure, this is what was happening to Jesus. His olive-colored skin was becoming white. As the disciples watched Jesus, perhaps they thought that He was going to faint. However, His skin went from white to glowing. Literally, his skin was flashing and radiating light. The reason that his garments became so white is because the body of Jesus was lighting up, like a giant light-bulb.

At first, we might be inclined to think of this as a strange occurrence. But, in reality, the stranger thing is to ask, "Why wasn't the appearance of Jesus like this all of the time?" The Bible tells us that God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). Whenever anyone in the Bible experienced the presence of God, they always describe it as a blinding light. Jesus, being God in the flesh, ought to be blinding like this all of the time. How is it that the glory and honor of Jesus was held in check by his human body? That's the strange thing.

At this point, Peter, James, and John are able to see the unveiled glory of Christ. But, this wasn't the only strange thing they saw. Verses 30-31 continues, "And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." This is quite a gathering! Moses, the giver of the law! Elijah, perhaps the greatest of the prophets. And Jesus, the God-man. And they were talking with each other.

What a conversation this must have been! They were talking about "His departure." They were talking about the time when Jesus would leave the earth and join them again in heaven. They were talking about the upcoming crucifixion of Christ. The cross was on their mind.

Why? Because the cross was what enabled Moses and Elijah to be there in the first place. They were anticipating the time when Jesus would accomplish their redemption in the space/time continuum. Unfortunately (for Peter anyway), he and James and John had slept through much of their conversation.

Verse 32 tells of what took place when they awoke, "Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him." This is Peter's point back in 2 Peter. "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). "We saw Jesus in all His glory. We aren't making these things up. We saw Him with our own eyes."

Verse 33 continues, "And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah'--not realizing what he was saying." Peter didn't want the time to end. As Moses and Elijah were about to leave and the party was about to end, Peter wanted to make the party last a little longer, "Let's make some tents and have a campout." I can sympathize with his heart in these things. But, really, such a request was a bit out of place. I'm sure that Moses and Elijah didn't really want to campout, when they could spend their night in the glories of heaven.

The climax of the story verse 34, "While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!' What a fearful and wonderful sight this must have been. This cloud began forming around the men on the mountain. The whole place darkened a bit. Finally, the cloud encompassed them and they heard a voice from heaven saying, 'This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him.'"

Mark's renders this a bit different, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" (Mark 9:7). Matthew's gospel is still a bit different, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!" (Matt. 17:5). The fact that each of the accounts have a bit different report is no reason for concern. God certainly said all of these things. Each gospel account merely took a portion of what God said. Put the full thing together, and you have God, the Father saying, "This is My beloved Son, My Chosen One, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!" Perhaps God said some more things that weren't recorded in any gospel. This is entirely possible.

Each of the gospel accounts all report the spirit of God's communication correctly. These words weren't spoken for Jesus' sake. They were spoken for the sake of the disciples. God, the Father, wanted the disciples to know for sure that this Jesus is the Messiah. The Son has His Father's approval. And what Matthew, Mark, and Luke all affirm is that Jesus is God's chosen, beloved Son to whom the disciples need to obey. It was a sort of divine confirmation of all that they had been experiencing for the few short years that they walked with Jesus.

Luke's account of the transfiguration concludes in verse 36 with these words, "And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen." Both Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus told them to "tell the vision to no one until [Jesus had] risen from the dead" (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9). But now that Peter is writing post-resurrection, he is able to tell the event to everyone. And that's what he's doing back in 2 Peter. He is making known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! He said, "We saw it!" (verse 16). "And we heard it." (verse 18). We saw His glory -- He was shining like a light bulb! We heard the Honor given to Him by the Father -- "This is My Beloved Son!"

Peter says, "We have reason to believe that He's coming again, because we have tasted the appetizer, and it's good. The full dinner is going to be even better! The faith that we have in Jesus Christ isn't some fairy tale (verse 16a) that was concocted in some closet someplace by some really smart guys. On the contrary, our faith is firm because our faith is based on eyewitnesses (verses 16b-18). That's Peter's point. But, Peter gives us a third reason this morning why our faith is firm. Our faith is firm because our faith is ...

3. Based on Scripture (verse 19).

In 2 Peter 1:19, Peter writes, "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." In looking at the Greek text, I do believe that the marginal reading in the New American Standard Bible is better. "We have the even more sure prophetic word" (verse 19) (which is the sense of the English Standard Version and the King James Version). In other words, it's not that the transfiguration of Jesus gave more credibility to the Scriptures. Rather, it's that the Scriptures are even more firm than is the eyewitness and earwitness accounts of someone well trusted.

Our faith is firm because our Scriptures are sure! This word that is translated here as "sure" or "certain" (NIV) is the same word as Peter used in verse 10, where he wrote, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make *sure* about His calling and choosing you." And we can be sure of God's calling of us and sure of God's choosing of us, because we have a sure prophetic word.

There are certain documents that are more trustworthy than others. If you take a research book off of your shelf (like a dictionary or encyclopedia), you can trust the accuracy of the book. It's gone through many revisions over the years. It's been updated often. It contains the truth. For the most part, you can trust what's in the local newspaper, although they do make some errors from time to time. Now, you may object to the opinions of the authors or not appreciate their political bias. However, the newspaper takes great effort in seeking to provide an accurate source of news to us. The writers are paid and trained to report the truth accurately.

Then, there's the internet. When you read something on the internet, it's not nearly as reliable, because anybody can say anything on the internet. And then, there are the tabloids, where you can't trust anything that's said in them. At times, there is a germ of truth in all of the celebrity gossip, but usually, that's about it, only a germ of truth.

Peter is saying here in verse 19 that the Bible is a sure and trusted resource to guide us. It's more sure than the tabloids. It's more sure than the internet. It's more sure than the newspaper. It's more sure than the dictionary. It's more sure than an eyewitness account. "We have the even more sure prophetic word" (verse 19). And Peter's warning comes in the last half of verse 19, "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."

One of the interesting story lines about this attack is that there may have been opportunity to defend Pearl Harbor against the attack. In the

1930's, U. S. intelligence had cracked the Japanese diplomatic code. For years, the Americans were tracking the Japanese messages. In order to protect the secrecy of these things, they regularly provided their intelligence to a very short list of people, including the president of the United States. But with all of the other things grabbing for His attention, Japanese diplomatic information was not much of a priority. However, upon finding one of their briefings in the president's waste basket, the president was briefly taken off the list of those receiving this communication. They didn't want anybody finding out that they had cracked the code.

I do believe that he was receiving these communications again when the The Jampanese ambassador to the United States was instructed that "All negotiations had to end by November 29" [5] After that, the message said, "things are automatically going to happen." [6] Such a message should have placed American troops on high alert, but "few thought that the Japanese were capable of launching a large-scale attack as far away as Pearl Harbor." [7] And then, on the morning of the attack, the radar installations picked up the Japanese attack force about an hour before they attacked Pearl Harbor. But, since Pearl Harbor was expecting some bombers from the west coast, these warning signs were ignored, until it was too late.

There are great parallels to our text this morning. We have intelligence far greater than the intelligence that the United States ever obtained from Japan. We know that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be with power. Will you pay attention to the intelligence? The Bible, our faithful, reliable guide has told us of what will take place. Jesus Christ will come in power and authority.

Peter then tells us, that you would do well "to pay attention" to it, "as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." Picture with me a dark room, with nothing shining but a single lamp. Where will your eyes focus? You won't be off looking into the darkness. But, you will look at the lamp. When you stand around a fire late at night, what do you look at? You don't look off into the dark woods. No, there is something about a light shining in a dark place that compels us to look at the light. We can stand there and look for hours at the flickering fire.

The Scriptures are a lamp shining in a dark place. The world is a very dark place. And too often, we are enamored by the darkness. But, Peter says, "Look at the light." Are you looking at the light?

The promise that Jesus gives is that there will be a day in which the morning star will arise in your heart. That's talking about Jesus. He is the rising morning star that will cast away the darkness. We have a firm faith, so trust in Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 7, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] All quotes in this paragraph were taken from the Scholastic Encyclopedia of the United States at War, pp. 120-121.

[2] This quote is all over the internet. One source for it is <http://pearlharborattacked.com/>.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Scholastic Encyclopedia of the United States at War, p. 145.

[5] Scholastic Encyclopedia of the United States at War, p. 120.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.