

Superman

When I was a kid I loved Superman. I told you guys the story of when I tried to fly. Superman was invincible.

Superman was born on the planet Krypton and was given the name Kal-El at birth. As a baby, his parents sent him to Earth in a small spaceship moments before Krypton was destroyed in a natural cataclysm.

His ship landed in the American countryside, near the fictional town of Smallville. He was found and adopted by farmers Jonathan and Martha Kent, who named him Clark Kent. Clark developed various superhuman abilities, such as incredible strength and impervious skin. His foster parents advised him to use his abilities for the benefit of humanity, and he decided to fight crime as a vigilante.

Superman was Super....man. He wasn't afraid of anything. Nothing could touch him. When he went somewhere He had no fear. He knew he was invincible except for that whole kryptonite thing....

I love that when the world was freaking out....Mild Mannered...Clark Kent...hiding behind his glasses... went into the phone booth and came out a Super hero. He was so...cool. So invincible...Not afraid of anything. I wanted to live like that. I wanted to go places and not be afraid. To go places and know that nothing can hurt me. To know that I was from somewhere else and thus could not be held back by this world. What would it be like to be clothed like superman....and go everywhere....unafraid and invincible.

Last week Peter reminded us that everything we see...the earth...the universe...everything will one day be destroyed by God through fire. We learned that nothing He created matters if we are not here to experience it. He loves us far more than anything He created. In fact, something that you may never have thought about....

We will outlive the universe. Let that truth soak in for a moment. You will outlive Mars. You will outlive Mt. Everest, the Grand Canyon, and every galaxy that you have ever seen.

In fact, you and I will watch it happen. One Day.....Jesus will return at His Second Coming...then following the Millennial Kingdom...there will be a day when God will finally judge the world and to put everything through the refining fire.

As far as we can tell from God's Word, the elements of the world will not cease to be. They will pass through a purifying flame and be dissolved by heat and utterly melt away. Then I love the way Charles Spurgeon says it...

"This world, so far as we know, will not cease to be; it will pass through the purifying flame, and then it may be the soft and gentle breath of Almighty love will blow upon it and cool it rapidly, and the divine hand will shape it as it cools into a paradise more fair."

If you think this world is incredible...just wait for the next one. This world is being corroded and polluted by the impact of sin. We have never experienced a place with pure water, pure air, free of disease....and I believe in this universe, God is just warming up...no pun intended.

You and I are going to see the glory of God fully manifested....we will see what John saw....we will outlive everything that we have ever known.

Revelation 20:11–12 (ESV) 11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

Revelation 20:14–15 (ESV) 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:1–4 (ESV) 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21:5–8 (ESV) 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

So with that image in mind, Peter begins the close of his last letter to us.

2 Peter 3:11–13 (ESV) 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

Peter asks the question we should ask ourselves every day. Based on what we know about our future. Based on what we know about the world. Based on what we know about the promises of God...What kind of lives should we be living now?

What should we value? Where should we be making our investments? What should we be storing up? How should we think about our time here on earth? Where is our home? If we will outlive the destruction of the universe what do we have to be afraid of? What do we have to worry about?

Jesus came to the earth on a mission. He clearly knew where His home was...He clearly knew that His time on earth was short and for a specific eternal purpose...He clearly lived on earth with an eternal perspective...Everywhere He went He walked in victory....He knew that nothing on earth could really hurt Him or truly harm Him....He knew that His earthly body was a temporary "earth suit" for His Spirit....He held tight to only one thing....human relationships. Why? Because they are the only thing that matters.

We struggle because we don't embrace how special we are in God's eyes. We don't really comprehend the value that He places on those who bear His image. We don't grasp the depth of His love for us.

Peter is asking...if Jesus knew all of these things...and we are His disciples...His followers...His Talmidim...And we know all of these things....Why is our experience on earth so much different than His?

Why aren't His followers walking in the truth that they claim to know?

We don't seem to grasp the truth that we are reborn as eternal human beings...that we are eternal...that we are living on earth but our true home is now in heaven...that we have been allowed to remain on earth because God has us on His mission....That we are heavenly eternal beings housed in a special "Earth Suit" that we will use...until God says our mission here is accomplished.

Peter tells us...we are waiting...yes this world will burn up and we will watch it...But Peter says...that is not what we are really waiting for....

2 Peter 3:11–13 (ESV) 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Notice that we are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth....think about that for a moment....brand spankin new....imagine the first moment of that experience...and then imagine that those moments never end....Why is this world so incredible? Peter tells us...

A new earth in which righteousness dwells. This new earth is going to be incredible...Peter says...because it will be a place where righteousness dwells? Isn't that Great! Aren't you excited? But you may be thinking...that sounds great...I guess I want that...but....What does that mean?

Dictionaries define righteousness as "behavior that is morally justifiable or right." Such behavior is characterized by accepted standards of morality, justice, virtue, or uprightness. The Bible's standard of human righteousness is God's own perfection in every attribute, every attitude, every behavior, and every word.

In the broadest sense, righteousness can be defined as "the condition of being acceptable to God as made possible by God." God's standard is what defines true righteousness; His power is what enables it. Unless God is its author, we will never possess righteousness. No amount of man-made effort will result in righteousness. To be righteous is to be right with God.

Translated...Righteousness is God's Perfection....in everything....Righteousness is meeting the standard that Jesus met...every time.

You may be thinking...well if that is the standard...I am definitely not righteous...I can't live up to perfection...only Jesus could do that. Exactly...

Romans 3:10–12 (ESV) 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

That is why God never says that you are righteous....He says that you are righteous in Christ....that you are clothed in Christ's righteousness....That Jesus' righteousness covers those who believe.

We aren't righteous...we are MADE righteous...IN Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:20–21 (ESV) 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Don't misread that to think that somehow you are becoming more and more righteous...you are not. The change you see over time is that you begin to understand the full measure of the righteousness Christ has already given you.

The Righteousness of Christ is His gift to us.

Right now you and I are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. His blood shed on the cross covers us...Just like the blood on the door at Passover covered those who placed their faith in God...Judgement passed over as God's righteousness was covering them.

Isaiah 61:10–11 (ESV) 10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

Our righteousness is based on what Jesus did on the cross. The righteousness that was Christ's is counted to us. We, then, are seen as righteous in the eyes of God. Though we are actually worthy of damnation, we are made righteous by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. As a result, will spend eternity in the presence of the holy, pure, loving, kind, gentle, and righteous God. And we will be in a righteous standing with Him because of our faith in Jesus.

We are here on earth...Heavenly beings....in a temporary earth suit...surrendering as the Holy Spirit transforms us to be more like Christ.

Philippians 1:5–11 (ESV) 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ....10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

But please understand this....You don't become more righteous...Yes you grow to be more like Christ...but you are not becoming more righteous because of your efforts...You are...day by day...moment by moment...realizing the full extent of the righteousness of Christ that has already been given to you...You have right now all the righteousness you will ever receive.

In fact, you will be no more righteous in heaven than you are right now. I'm not talking about your behavior. I'm talking about your nature.

If you don't see yourself the way God sees you....You haven't spent enough time abiding in His mirror....As we study the Scriptures...as we pray...as we abide in Christ....He replaces the image that we have of ourselves with the true image of who we actually already are. He shows us what He sees when we abide in Him. He sees us with all the righteousness of Christ already in our possession....fully given to us...but not yet fully realized by us.

Sadly though, many of us have not spent enough time abiding...in Scripture...in prayer and in relationship to embrace and live in the manner to which we have been called.

Paul saw people at Ephesus who had become lazy in their faith...and he called them out.

Ephesians 4:19–24 (ESV) 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

There are two groups of righteous people in the world today and everyone is either in one or the other...You and I are either righteous in Christ or we are self-righteous.

You and I are given righteousness through Christ.....we are the Righteous Brothers...and sisters...

This new world....this new creation is going to be incredible because it will be the dwelling place....of righteousness....

Everything perfect in Christ. Everyone perfect in Christ. Christ's perfection finally fully manifested in all of His creation.

So, Peter, says.....shouldn't that change the way you live your life here on earth?

2 Peter 3:14 (ESV) 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

Interesting that Peter used the words "without spot or blemish"

Ephesians 5:25–27 (ESV) 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Let me help you with the pronouns here. As Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that Christ may sanctify the church, having cleansed the church with the washing of water with the word, so that Christ may present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish.

Paul is telling us that husbands are to love their wives in the same way Christ loved His church.

Do all we can do to be without spot or blemish. Peter is quoting Paul here....this is very important to notice.

Peace...Shalom. We are to be found without spot or blemish and oddly Peter tells us....at peace. God's peace...God's supernatural peace should characterize us. How can we be at such peace? By realizing who we are, why we are here, and where we are going.

If God is for us, who can be against us? We can live in total peace....not because we decide to, but because Jesus offers it to us as a gift. Just like He offers us righteousness....He offers us peace...His peace...Peace from the throne of God.

We have all of His peace just like we have been given all of His righteousness....the only problem is that we haven't fully embraced and lived in the gifts Jesus has given us.

John 14:27 (ESV) 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Jesus gives us His peace...and He tells us not to be troubled or afraid. So while we wait for Jesus to return and in light of all that we know about who and whose we are...we are to live without blemish and at total peace. Is that where you are this morning?

2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV) 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Notice key words here. He goes back to the theme of the false teachers...their challenge that since God hasn't come back yet...He is a liar....and he talks about how false teachers twist the truth of God to their own destruction.

Peter, the leader of the church in Jerusalem...one of Jesus' inner circle of three....is validating the writings of Paul as true Scripture from an apostle.

In his closing Peter is summarizing what we have already been told about the false teachers.

Then right before Peter closes his last letter he does something incredible...and incredibly critical.

In the last words of Peter...Peter brings up Paul.....why? This is where all the context we studied comes into play.

Peter had the dream that said to take the message to the Gentiles....Peter met with Paul and validated Paul's missionary journeys...Peter revealed the standard for Gentiles to come to know Christ- they didn't have to be circumcised..they didn't have to be Jewish.....Now Peter is dying.

If anyone has the spunk to pick up where Peter left off...and complete the mission Peter started...it is Paul.

The gnostics were challenging Peter as one who lacks authority to determine the truth about Jesus....

Remember that Peter had to tell them...I was on the mountain....I saw Jesus transformed...If you don't believe me...ask John he was there too.

But Paul wasn't....Paul was never there...He didn't follow Jesus at all when He was on earth...Paul in fact tried to have Jesus killed.

Why is this so important? Paul was not one of the original 12. He claimed that Jesus saved Him and bestowed upon Him the office of Apostle. One who has been with Jesus. Paul's encounter with Jesus and His claim to apostleship was self-proclaimed. No one truly witnessed it.

Paul was essentially a self-proclaimed Apostle. He said that Jesus met him in a vision and bestowed upon him the title and authority to bring the gospel message not just to the Jews but to the Gentiles.

Everyone was initially skeptical of Paul as an apostle. He has to prove his calling through sacrifice and suffering for Christ. So, if the gnostics and false teachers were blistering Peter who had the witnessed claim to Apostleship...just imagine what they were doing to Paul. You don't have to imagine it...they are still doing it today.

Gnostics today say all the time that we should ignore the writings of Paul and study only the 4 Gospels. Yet here we have Peter...one of the original 12....one who is responsible for the foundation of truth...for protecting truth...warning about false teachers....and he is saying....Paul is one of us...his writings are the Holy Word of God...His writings are truth...and before I leave this world...you need to know...I validate and endorse Paul as one who has been with Jesus and is responsible just like I am to protect the truth...

I love that Peter says Paul's writings are hard to understand. Because they are.

When I was studying the Pauline letters in Seminary, this verse was on my screen saver.

How do we know all of that? Peter tells us...He clearly had Paul's letters...at least some of them...and he has clearly read them....let's read what Peter, the Apostle has to say about Paul.

"There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures."

Do you see it? The huge word that Peter drops on everyone. The one word that changes everything that we know and understand about Paul?

OTHER.....Just like they do with the OTHER Scriptures.

Peter...the Leader of the Church....in his last letter....last few thoughts...takes the time to tell everyone...Yes Paul is a true Apostle and Yes His writings are from God...they are just like mine....they are truth...They are God's truth...Gnostics sent by Satan try to twist them...because they are true Words of God.

Every time people try to discount Paul's teachings I bring them to this passage.

Everyone today wants to discard Paul's writings because it is in those that God speaks to us about how to actually live out our faith. Is we can get rid of Paul they say, we can remove challenges to homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, moral codes, sacrificial servanthood, and hundreds of other things everyone wants to edit out of God's truth.

2 Peter 3:17–18 (ESV) 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

The Peter closes his letter....probably in tears...probably after a great deal of prayer....My beloved I have told you before hand...don't be carried away by these false teachers. Does that sound familiar to anyone? I have told you beforehand?

Peter is closing by reminding everyone of the very words of Christ.

Mark 13:21–23 (ESV) 21 And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

Then Peter says....Keep growing in the knowledge of Jesus....and then Peter says...goodbye.

So let's ask ourselves the question Peter wants us to consider. Knowing all that we know about who we are in Christ, "How then should we live?" On the outside at least physically, we look just like everyone else. But like Superman, we carry a secret. And there is no such thing as a Kryptonite problem for us.

Our home is elsewhere. We have been sent here on a mission. A mission for good. A rescue mission on earth. When times and circumstances get tough, we...like Superman...become transformed and His power and strength shine through us. His love, His peace, His Kindness, His Joy all manifested through us to a hurting world. Paul said it this way, If God is for us who can be against us?

We walk this earth...invincible...clothed not in some superman costume, but clothed in THE super God man Himself. We walk in His righteousness...with His power...His peace...His victory that is already

guaranteed. We will outlive everything that we see. We are indestructible spiritual beings having a human experience.

If you truly absorbed that truth in your life this week...what would change? Would there be anything in this world that you truly believe that you can't conquer? Any obstacles that you need to leap in a single bound? God said I am the God of all Heaven and Earth what is too hard for me? Paul said, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me....all things...What do you say? and more importantly....what do you Do?

If you truly realized and lived out who you are in Christ...Would you worry about anything? Would you be afraid of anything? Is there anything you wouldn't do or any place you would not go if God sent you there?

Do you know what I am afraid of? What if I was Superman and didn't know it? What if I never had the faith to step into the phone booth and live out my calling? What if I spent my entire life "IN Christ" and never really lived it....IN Christ? Never experiencing the power and strength available to me. Always trying to face the world limited to my strength and then getting to the end of my mission on earth and realize I had not lived to the potential God placed in me. How horrible it would be to have supernatural powers and never use them.

Not living in the victory, eternity, and peace that Jesus died to give to me. How tragic it would be to go through our entire life as Christ followers and never experience the life He truly had planned for us.

There is a lot in our world that can capture our attention and distract us from our mission. Fortunately this is not our world or our mission. Our world is yet to be built. But, like Jesus, we are just here visiting for a while. This world is not our home.

This life is not our life. This earth suit is not who we are. We are eternal...we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ...and we are sent here on a mission....to share the gospel at all costs...we have His peace and His Salvation. Let's Pray