

# A Growth That Endures...



A VERSE BY  
VERSE  
EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE OF  
2ND PETER

## What We Preach Is of God (Part II) 2 Peter 1:19-21 (729)

Julia and I traded in her car this past Tuesday evening. We were assisted by a nice young man at a local dealership. Over the course of the evening Julia and I were shuffled from this guy, to the finance guy, to the key guy, and so on. After about four hours, at 10:30 PM, we found ourselves standing out in front of the dealership with that young man who had sold us the car. As we waited for the clean up guys to bring the new car around I asked him a couple of questions that led into a presentation of the gospel of the grace of God in Christ. When I asked him if he would like to receive the gift of eternal life he responded, "Absolutely." We prayed together right there on the spot.

Let's assume that my friend's profession of faith was genuine. Here's the question. What will be the source of his assurance and confidence as he lives out his faith in the world? As he faces the hardships of this life? As he struggles with doubt and fear? As he faces temptations? I suggest to you that God will grant such assurance to him through the ministry of the Word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, our focus today is on the reliability of the

Scripture. Paul says in **Romans 15:4**, *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Certain teachers were sowing doctrinal error within the churches of Asia Minor. These men were also exhibiting and commending reckless, godless living to the members of the churches. The doctrinal and moral stability of the church was being threatened. II Peter was written to check this killer influence. Peter's aim is to stabilize the Christians. His primary strategy is to saturate the believers with the truth of the gospel so that the destructive errors (in doctrine or practice) would be recognized and resisted. Indeed, the big idea for the entire letter of II Peter is that growth in the truth of the gospel fortifies the church against the destabilizing influence of error. So important are these gospel truths that Peter says in **verse 12**, *Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things.* Peter was committed to the principle that the truth bears repetition. It is God's desire that we keep the truth of the gospel in our minds all of the time. God has called us to live gospel-conscious lives.

You see, the strategy of every false teacher is to disparage, to misrepresent the truth of the gospel; to have it perceived as something other than what it is. That strategy is behind their assertion that what the apostles have taught and preached are nothing more than *cleverly devised tales (1:16)*; that the gospel is a myth, a fairy tale or a fable; that the gospel is the product of misguided imagination; that the whole thing was made up.

So in **1:16-21** Peter is arguing that what they have been taught is true. He says in verse 16, *we did not follow cleverly invented stories when we preached the gospel to you*

(1:16). Peter is “defending the authenticity of the gospel he and the other apostles have preached. His strategy is to call two sets of witnesses to testify - the New Testament apostles (1:16-18) and the Old Testament prophets (19-21).

Last Sunday we considered the eye-witness testimony of the apostles in verses 16-18. *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.*<sup>17</sup> *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” --*<sup>18</sup> *and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.*

The testimony of the apostles is based upon the fact that they were *eye-witnesses of Christ’s majesty (1:16b)*. Peter says we know about the coming of the Lord. We have a sense of what it will be like. We have been granted a foretaste, a preview of it. Indeed, we were actually present at His transfiguration. We had front-row seats. We saw it. We were eye-witnesses. We were observes, spectators. Not only that but we heard it. We heard God the Father speak from the cloud. Peter is establishing the apostolic witness as accurate, authoritative, and reliable.

This morning we look at the prophetic witness as explained by Peter in 1:19-21. <sup>19</sup> *And 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.* <sup>20</sup> *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation,* <sup>21</sup> *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.* Now the big idea this morning is the same as it was last week – **what we preach is of God.**

**And so we have the prophetic word *made more sure.*** When Peter uses the phrase “prophetic word” he has in mind the Scriptures of the entire Old Testament – Genesis through Malachi. *And so we have the prophetic word made more sure.* Now there are two ways one might interpret this word “more sure.” Our English translation (NASB) suggests “that the Transfiguration confirms the truth of prophecy” (*Geneva Study Bible*, p. 1980). It’s like the transfiguration makes the future Second Coming more certain. In other words, “the apostolic witness fulfills, and thus authenticates, Scripture ... the voice at the transfiguration makes even more certain the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Lord” (M. Green, p. 97).

“A more natural interpretation of the Greek” (*GSB*, p. 1980) reads like this: *we also have the more sure prophetic word.* This suggests “that the prophetic word of Scripture is a more solid proof than even the spectacular experience of witnessing the Transfiguration” (*Geneva Study Bible*, p. 1980). In other words, “The Scriptures confirm the apostolic witness” (Green, p. 97). We’re going with this second view.

Let me make sure you understand what Peter is not saying. All Scripture is inspired by God. The Gospel is no more “God-breathed” than the Old Testament. All Scripture is authoritative. The Gospel is no more authoritative than the Old Testament. All Scripture is trustworthy. The Gospel is no more reliable than the Old Testament. “The question,” Calvin says, “is not whether the prophets are more trustworthy than the gospel.” Peter is not comparing Scripture with Scripture to determine which is more inspired, authoritative, or trustworthy. Here in verse 19 the eyewitness testimony to a stunning experience

is being compared with the written revelation of God – the written, the ink-on-paper Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Indeed, “it is hard to overemphasize [the apostles’ and the Jews’] regard for the Old Testament” (M. Green, p. 98). The Jews, including the apostles, “were in no doubt that everything that the prophets taught was from God” (M. Green, p. 98). Peter, in his sermon in Acts 3 said, *“But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled” (3:18)*. Peter speaks of Christ *“whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (3:21)*. A verse from the last chapter in Acts, **28:23**, says, *and when they had set a day for [Paul], they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening*. Here’s the point: according to one commentator “[Peter] is saying, ‘If you don’t believe me, go to the Scriptures’ “ (Michael Green, p. 98).

Go to the Scriptures. The Scriptures, he says in verse 19, **to which you do well to pay attention**. Here Peter commends the written Word of God to his readers and to us. How much notice do you take of the Word of God? Does the Bible occupy a place of honor and esteem in your life? I believe their religion to be false and their zeal terribly misguided but, as we have learned recently, Muslims are serious when it comes to how the Koran is treated. The holy book of the Sikh religion of India is highly respected. Michael Bentley explains that “no Sikh will read that book without first having a bath and a complete change of clothing” (p. 206). My concern is not what you wear when you read the Bible, not whether it is displayed on a stand in your home, or how you carry it around. My concern is

whether or not you read it, study it, memorize it, meditate upon it, and apply it to your life. My concern is whether or not you cherish it, submit to it, take it in as a hungry man takes in life-giving food. Look at the Bible in your hands. Is it well worn? Is it marked up? Does it show evidence of having been used? God has spoken! God has spoken and that revelation has come to us in ink on paper.

And we are to *pay attention* to the Bible **as to a lamp shining in a dark place**. The Bible often incorporates the metaphor of the Word of God as a light. **Psalm 119:105** may be the most well known. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path.* **Proverbs 6:23** says, *the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light.* At the same time the Bible consistently paints the world without the living God as a dark, dismal, murky place. With Luther we say, “the conclusion follows that all besides [the Word] is darkness. For if there were another light besides the Word, Peter would not have spoken as he did. Therefore look not to how gifted with reason they are who teach any other doctrine – however grandly they set it forth. If you cannot trace God’s Word in it, then doubt not that it is mere darkness” (*Commentary of Peter and Jude*, p. 248). It is the light of the Word of God that reveals hidden pitfalls in the path of obedience. It is the light of the Word of God that exposes our sin. It is the light of the Word of God that teaches us what we should know to be necessary for salvation.

And this is and will be the case **until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts**. I want you to look at a couple of verses with me. First, **Numbers 24:17**, *“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob.”* This verse may be behind **Revelation 22:16** where Jesus says, *“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.”* A note in the *Geneva Study Bible* says,

“We understand the symbolism to refer to Christ in His Second Coming. *Day dawns* and *morning star* apparently refer to the Second Coming of Christ, an external event. *Arises in your hearts*, however, is clearly a term that has to do with the subjective effects on men. Peter apparently refers to the effect on believers of the full revelation that will accompany Christ’s return. His readers must pay attention to the sure prophetic word [the Scripture] until the day when that word will be superceded by the full revelation to come” (see pp. 1980-81).

**But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation (1:20).** This verse can be taken one of two ways. Michael Green puts it simply. “First, no prophecy arises from the prophet’s own interpretation. [In other words], it is given by God. Second, no prophecy is to be understood by private interpretation, but as the church interprets it. In the first case it is the prophet’s understanding of his prophecy which is at issue, in the second it is our interpretation of the prophet’s words” (p. 100). Certainly, the false teachers of Peter’s day did misinterpret Scripture. Score a point for view number two. As is pointed out elsewhere, “Peter’s concern here is the reliability of Scripture itself, and not the authority of those who interpret it” (*Geneva Study Bible*, p. 1981). So we accept view number one as more likely.

“Peter is talking about the divine *origin* of Scripture, not about its proper *interpretation*” (Green, p. 102). “The same God whom the apostles heard speak in the transfiguration spoke also through the prophets ... Thus we can rely on the apostolic account of the transfiguration because God spoke. And we can rely on Scripture because behind its human authors God spoke. The prophets did not make up what they wrote [any more than the apostles concocted their accounts]” (Green, p. 101). As Calvin wrote, “[The prophets] did not blab their inventions of

their own accord or according to their own judgments” (as quoted by Green, p. 101).

**For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will.** Now in verses 16-18 Peter responded to the charge that the apostles were propagating a myth; that the gospel was a fabrication. Here, in verse 21 he responds to the charge that the prophets simply communicated their own ideas. Again Peter argues that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are not the product of human imagination or ingenuity **but [rather] men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

We have come to one of the central passages dealing with the inspiration of Scripture. Maybe the most familiar is **II Timothy 3:16**, *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.* Inspiration deals with the essential character of the Scripture. *All Scripture is inspired by God.* The literal translation of the Greek here is *God-breathed* [(*Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, p.285)]. This is “another way of saying that Scripture is God’s word” (Knight). In **John 10:35** Jesus uses the terms “word” and “Scripture” interchangeably - “*to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken).*”

Now the inspiration in view here must not be confused with “the inspiration which prompts great hymns or great sermons” (*Beacon*, p.285). Paul is arguing “that the influencing and superintending of the Spirit was sufficiently dynamic and dominant to assure that what the Spirit *wanted* said *was* said, without distortion or error ... that the words accurately express the Spirit-given thoughts” (*Beacon*, p.286).

What does Peter mean when he says they were *moved by the Holy Spirit*? Green explains, “[Peter] uses a fascinating maritime metaphor in verse 21. The same Greek word is used in Acts 27:15 and 17 of a ship carried along by the wind. The prophets raised their sails, so to speak (they were obedient and receptive), and the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft along in the direction he wished. Men spoke: God spoke” (Green, pp. 102-103).

Now let’s be clear. God did not violate their personalities. God did not elevate them to some sort of spiritual state in which their normal mental functions were inoperative. On the contrary, God used the backgrounds, the experiences, the personalities, the education and so forth of the human authors. Revelation was not a matter of passive reception. Rather, there was active cooperation between the human and divine authors. Men spoke; God spoke.

Remember, Peter’s aim is to stabilize believers whose faith has been and is being shaken by doctrinal error and reckless living. In **verses 19-21** the Spirit of God is bolstering our confidence in the reliability of the revelation of God. He wants us to be assured that the gospel we have heard, the gospel we have believed, and the gospel that governs our very lives is of God. Beloved, you can adhere tenaciously to this gospel. The Bible is not merely a collection of wise sayings, astute observations of human behavior, or universal principles for living. “The Bible is not the subjective record of a religious [phenomenon] that we can supplement or challenge with our own experience. God has spoken” (Lucas/Green, p. 79). Take courage. **What we preach is of God.**

# A Growth That Endures...



A VERSE BY  
VERSE  
EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE OF  
2ND PETER

## What We Preach Is of God (Part II) 2 Peter 1:19-21 (729)

The big idea of II Peter: **growth in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the gospel \_\_\_\_\_ the church against the destabilizing influence of \_\_\_\_\_.**

Peter is arguing that what they (his readers) have been taught is \_\_\_\_\_.

### **2 Peter 1:19-21**

**And 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**

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

**for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will**

**but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**