

God's Word: Relevant and Reliable Truth

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[0 : 00] Well, I don't know about you, but I am thrilled to be back in 2 Peter. I'm ready to go. I have had a wonderful time this week.

Even though the time was a bit pressed, I've had a great time studying this passage of Scripture because it is so encouraging for me personally to be reminded that I serve an almighty, sufficient Savior who has given us a wonderfully sufficient Scripture to guide us in life, to help me understand who I am and what I'm about.

So I get up every single day, and I don't have to guess about who Jeff is. I don't have to go find myself. Jesus has found me and secured me, and that's enough.

And then Jesus gives me my mission every day, every single day of my life. I know exactly what the Lord expects of me and desires of me. Even though I may not have answers to certain circumstances, I stand on the anchor of my soul, who is Christ.

This is what Peter is giving us throughout this letter, and this is what I've been studying this past week in the passage before us. The title of my message, then, God's Word, Relevant and Reliable Truth.

[1 : 21] From the book of 2 Peter, we're back, God willing, working verse by verse, and we're in chapter 1, and I want to ask you a few questions, and of course make some comments in the way of introduction before I read the text to you.

I don't think it's any shock or surprise to you that I would say we live in a society who is expressing a growing impatience with the gospel.

The message of the cross is, and we can't avoid it, counter-cultural. Because the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God are counter to each other.

Now, what I'm saying echoes a similar situation Peter's readers were living in. And this has been with us since the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden.

The question I want to ask you at this point, several questions actually, concerns how you and I think about that reality of living counter-culturally as we seek to live for the cross, by the cross, defined by the cross.

[2 : 39] We don't mean to be antagonistic, and certainly we are not called to be mean or cruel or selfish or uppity or prideful about the reality that we've been called to a life of cross-living, cross-bearing, right?

Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. At the same time, the more faithful that you and I seek to be in living out the reality of the cross, the more the world will hate us.

It's a spiritual reality that God must open the eyes of the unbelieving to see the glories of Jesus Christ. So we're called to live faithfully. Now, as we think about all of that, here's the question I want to ask you.

What will sustain you and I as God's people in a pure and present hope? What will provide us with the power to persevere for Jesus' sake?

What will move you in the deepest part of your being to forsake your pride, your tendency toward comfort, personal gain, in order to pursue a life of humility, suffering, self-denial, for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the gospel?

[4 : 16] Well, that's what Peter's answering. That's what Peter's concerned with. That's where you and I live every day. We live in these questions every single day.

Now, I can tell you this to begin with. Nothing earthly will lead you in a life of devotion to Jesus and his gospel. Nothing.

You cannot look to the wisdom of man to make living for Jesus both attractive and worthwhile. The harder you look for the world to affirm you in a life of worthwhile living for Jesus and making Jesus

attractive in that life, the more you look to the world to help you with that, the more frustrated you'll become.

It won't do it because the world is counter to the cross. That is the system that we live in. We're not in heaven yet. The world offers us nothing to encourage us in living for Jesus' sake and glory.

Now, for those of you who are visiting, does he always preach like this? Is it always such a bummer? Now, stay with me. I have to give you the bad news and the reality to shake us up and help us realize we're all thinking like that.

[5 : 38] Yes, we all come in here this morning saying this. Life is hard. That's true. So if you came in here this morning burdened, we understand.

We don't want you to stay that way. We want you to look to your Lord, to your Savior, to your Christ, and we want you to have hope. We may not be able to change or alter your circumstances, but what we can do is point you to the hope of Jesus in those circumstances.

We can help you understand how he should make all the difference in the way that you live. Peter then writes to his audience and reminds his readers of what God has provided for us in Jesus Christ.

Jesus then, as I've said, is our hope both now and for our future. In Jesus, you and I have the power to persevere in this life for his sake.

That's what we've been called to. We've been called to him and to live for him, not for ourselves.

Paul, Peter, James, they all say this throughout the New Testament.

[6 : 57] We have been called to live for him. You and I follow Jesus's example of humility, suffering, self-denial. So, beloved, Jesus is our treasure.

Jesus himself is our reward. Jesus Christ is our all in all. In every single Lord's Day, we come together to be reminded of that reality, energized by those truths, and then we go back out into our mission field with that hope burning in our very souls.

To face the reality of what's out there for us every single day. We're not glossing over the fact that life is hard. We're just trying to help us focus on what the Bible tells us to do with those hardships. Bring them to the Savior and live in the hope that he offers. What is that hope? Is it the hope that Jesus will change our circumstances and make our life happy again?

Not necessarily. The hope that he points us to and the hope that Peter's going to point us to is the hope of a future coming when all will be made right and we will be brought into paradise.

[8 : 17] No more tears. No more sin. No more suffering. This is all temporary. We have to live in the reality that this is all temporary.

Everything you see with your visible eyes right now, save one thing, is going to burn in the end and be remade. The only thing that you see sitting here now, invisible to your physical eyes, but with your spiritual eyes, you know, are the souls of the people in this room.

The souls of these people will be preserved. Everything else goes away and gets remade. We need to live with these truths and being reminded of these truths.

And so, if you'll look with me in chapter 1, verse 15, as we walk into our text, 2 Peter 1, 15, Peter says, And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure, you will be able to call these things to mind.

Now, we've covered a lot of ground already as we've come to that verse. That is where I ended last time I was in 2 Peter. It was some time ago. We've done all the rest of chapter 1 up to that particular point.

[9 : 36] And I will also be diligent, is Peter's aim, that at any time after my departure, he knows he's about to be martyred, about to be killed for his faith. All of you, my readers, my brothers and sisters in Christ, will be able to call these things that I'm reminding you about to mind and live your life based on these realities.

So, facing down his imminent death, Peter's greatest concern for his fellow believers is that they will live out an active faith in Jesus.

A faith, he says, firmly established in God's truth, which Peter and the other apostles have given their very lives to teach them.

You remember, all of the apostles are going to be martyred, killed for their faith, save John. All of them will die a horrible death as they maintain their faith in the gospel.

And they'll be killed for that faith. In verses 16 through 21, our passage for this morning, we will take Peter's series of instructions in two halves, just as he presents this passage to us.

[10 : 54] The first half, in verses 16 through 18, express his concerns that they trust the truth of the eyewitness testimonies of what Peter and the apostles made known to them about Jesus' powerful coming.

He will come again. In the second section, 19 through 21, he expresses his concerns for them to rest their faith or to pay careful attention to.

That's the calling. The greater and even more trustworthy testimony of the prophetic word made more sure. That's how he expresses it. So now let's read that passage together and then we'll begin to unpack it.

Verse 16. For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

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.

[12 : 02] And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. So we, we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as 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, 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. This is how we're going to break it down then in terms of these two halves, two main points.

And we'll elaborate our way through these verses together. The first is seeing and hearing the incarnate word, the incarnate word. And I'll explain that as we go in verses 16 through 18.

Now beloved, notice in the text in verse 16, how Peter begins, because this sets the tone for what he's concerned with. For we did not follow cleverly devised tales.

[13 : 21] We did not. We did not follow. Sets the tone. We did not pursue. We did not form.

We did not base our teaching on cleverly devised human tales. Cleverly devised is actually one word in the Greek. And it means pretty much what you would think.

It means to cunningly invent. And catch this part. To artfully frame something by human cleverness. That's what Peter and the apostles are being accused of.

And that's why Peter is making now a defense. He's making an argument, an apologetic, if you will, based on the truth of what they have been eyewitnesses to.

And so he says to them, look, we are not artfully and cleverly manufacturing what we have been telling you and teaching to you and even what I say to you now.

[14 : 21] That is not what we've been doing with you. Tales. Tales that he says. Look. For we did not follow cleverly devised tales.

Tales is the Greek word *muthois*. You can see by the way that it's written, it's where we get our English word myth. New Testament believers were steeped and surrounded by the myths of both Jewish and Greek cultures in which they lived.

Even rabbis, Jewish rabbis, embellished Old Testament history and added much, much to the scriptures and weighed the people down with all kinds of nonsense, convoluting the truth of the Lord.

Jesus scathingly accused them of that. You can read Mark 7 and see that. Even the Greeks, which you're probably more familiar with, had their stories about gods and fables about demigods, right? Full of that kind of thing. This is what these people were raised in, steeped in. This is the air they breathed as they grew up in these cultures. The issue then for Peter is to answer the charge of these false teachers.

[15 : 41] In chapter 2, he's going to take these guys apart and he's going to expose them for what they are. We'll spend all of chapter 2 talking about false teachers and what they're doing in the midst of these believers and why Peter, as a true apostle of Jesus, is so desperately concerned for them.

That's to come. Right now, it's enough to say that Peter is answering the charge of these false teachers and he's coming to confront the errors of the false teachers. Get this.

And their own use of myths, fables, and tales. You see what these men are doing? They're wanting to accuse the apostles, the prophets of old, and all the apostles are teaching, of doing the very things that they themselves are doing.

It's a smokescreen. Peter is going to expose them. The question then, what was the charge against the apostles being made by all these false teachers in the area where Peter's writing this letter? They are charging that the apostles were guilty of self-invented speculations in all that they taught and proclaimed.

[16:52] If they had taught, if it was true, if the charge was true, if the apostles had taught myths and speculations, then those would have no authenticity as they claim is coming from the Lord and then no authority.

So now you can begin to see what they are after as they seek to undermine the apostles' teaching, ultimately what they're wanting to do because all of false doctrine are doctrines of demons.

Yes, the doctrines of demons are trying to undermine the authority of God and the authority of the word. That's what's at stake here. We don't want to elevate ourselves too much and make ourselves think we're all that.

We're simply targets because we are followers of the cross. What the demons want to undermine is our mission to bring the cross to our culture. That's what's happening here.

That's what's at stake. Friends, we see inherent in Peter's argument the very issues that my brother Greg brought up this morning as he talked to you about what we're doing in Theology Nights on Wednesday night.

[17:59] Now I recognize Theology Nights is not a flashy title, is it? Well, we're not calling it that to be flashy and get people to come because we're doing anything flashy.

We want you to come as a church family on Wednesday nights because Wednesday nights is where we're drilling down a bit and we're helping you understand how the truths of Scripture apply to your life.

Now, of course, I try to do that on Sunday mornings, but this is a monologue. I'm not asking for you to give me feedback. You can say amen all you want to, but keep everything else to yourself till after I finish.

On Wednesday night, we want you to interact with us. We want you to talk to us. We want to talk to each other. We want to affirm the truth. We want to deal with the sticky, thorny issues that plague us.

We want you to leave on Wednesday night with an even greater and clearer understanding about how the Scripture applies to your everyday living. What does the Scripture have to do with me changing diapers and raising kids and going to work and dealing with obnoxious people?

[19:03] What does the Scripture have to do with me when I look in the mirror and just think, are you ever going to get your act together? What do I do with all that? Theology is the study of God.

Theo or theos, God. Ology or logos. It is speak or say. So what does, what can we say about God? And that came to be known as the study of God and His character, His nature, His ways. So as you think about theology, theologos, what does or what can we say about God?

How do we know God? How do we understand Him? That's what theology is. Very practical. We all need to know this and study this together. Well, guess what we did last Wednesday night.

We studied the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture together. And Greg led that study and took us to various places in the Bible to help us understand. You may be sitting here today and say, I don't know what those words mean scripturally.

[20:11] I don't know what those words have to do with my faith. Let us help you. That's just a little advertisement you saw. I left my notes and I'm out here doing my commercial for all of you.

But no, what I was saying to you is what we see in Peter's argument are the issues. I want to draw these out and help you see. The issues of inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency as it relates to God's Word.

One, folks, listen. One of the many, many criticisms of the Bible, especially from educated unbelievers, is that the Bible is full of myths, fanciful stories.

How can anybody really believe the hard things the Bible talks about, but especially, I mean, come on, a guy being pushed over a boat and getting swallowed by a whale and living inside a big fish for three days and nights and then getting spit out of?

Come on. Yeah. See my sermons from months ago on Jonah. I preached it as literal truth. We believe Jonah was swallowed by a whale because that's what the Bible says.

[21:23] Now, you understand. People hear that and say, you're ridiculous. You people are ridiculous. You've gotten so entrenched in your religion that you've become narrow-minded.

You've become gullible. You're like little kids believing fairy tales. You understand? This is what they say. Educated people criticize the Scripture and say this.

The Bible is a 2,000-plus, if you go into the Old Testament, even more than that, a 2,000-plus-year-old document. It's ancient, outmoded, outdated. It is simply not sophisticated enough to bring it over into modern-day life and deal with the issues, the complexities that we face every day in our lives.

Here's what they forget. Here's what they refuse to acknowledge. Here is what they rebel against. They don't understand, accept, or acknowledge that the Bible has a single author who is timeless. He is not bound by anything contemporary or ancient. To God, it's not contemporary or ancient. He is and fills space and time. Get your mind around that one.

[22 : 31] And so is His Word. And it carries forward. And He keeps His Word in the authoritative place that it needs to be in the lives of human beings.

They also fail to take into consideration that the people who lived thousands of years ago, when this was written, are just like the people today. They're human beings. They're sinners in need of a Savior.

These are timeless truths, timeless realities. You can have confidence in the Bible, Christian. You can have confidence in God's Word telling you how to live a life of faith and godliness that pleases the Lord from now until He brings you home.

That's the truth. That's what Peter is trying to help our readers grow in confidence with. It's a wonderful, wonderful way of dealing with this.

So again, the criticisms of Scripture, especially as they come from educated people, are that the Bible is just not sophisticated. It's just too full of myths. It's just too hard to dissect anything that we would take from Scripture that might be helpful, might be useful.

[23 : 40] But on the whole, it's just a fanciful book. Sometimes it's fun to read. Sometimes it's hard to read. But at the end of the day, I just don't get it. So let's read something else.

Peter is not about to allow his teaching and shepherding to be controlled or defined by scoffers. Now hear what I say carefully, please. Peter is not concerned about arguing with pagans for the sake of argument. That's not what this is about.

Let me show you a couple of places where Paul affirms this kind of approach. Now Paul is writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy.

We could go to a number of places. I'm just going to give you a couple. And remember now, as he writes these letters, Paul writes these letters in 1 Timothy, he's writing to his protegee, his young pastoral trainee, and he's talking about issues in the church.

[24 : 45] He's not simply talking about how to deal with unbelievers. He's talking about how to handle these issues among your brothers and sisters in local church life. And so here's what he says in 1 Timothy 1, as he starts his letter, verse 3.

As I urged you upon my departure from Macedonia, he left Timothy there in Ephesus, Remain on at Ephesus so that what? You may instruct certain men, that is, men within the church, not to teach strange doctrines, notice verse 4, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation, rather than furthering the administration of God, which is by faith. In other words, these kinds of doctrines and arguments serve to undermine faith, not encourage it. What does he say in verse 5? But, in great contrast to all of that, the goal of any instruction or commandment that we give is love.

Love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. All of those things he mentioned in verses 3 and 4, they work against love, they work against a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

So he warns them against it. If you look at 1 Timothy chapter 4, we'll pick it up in verses 6 and 7. He goes on to tell Timothy, in pointing out these things, the things that he's been telling him about, what it means for them to live a sanctified or holy life before the Lord.

[26 : 37] In pointing out these things to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the myths and speculations and fables that I mentioned earlier.

No, that's not what he said. Constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following, but have nothing to do with worldly fables, fit only for old women.

On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. These are the contrasts that we see throughout the New Testament as we face up with these fables and myths and arguments of men.

We are not called to be contentious. We're called to be faithful to the truth. So Peter has, the point is, that Peter has a much greater concern in mind for his readers than just teaching them how to argue with pagans.

What is the primary subject that Peter is addressing? That's a question you would ask if you were studying this passage. What is the primary subject that Peter is addressing? What does he say next then in connection with his concern about myths and speculations as we move down through verse 16?

[27 : 54] What does he say next? For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you what? The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does that tell us? It tells us that Peter's concern, notice, power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter's concern about the charge that the false teachers are leveling against them, the charge that he and the other apostles are teaching nothing more than myths and speculations, Peter's concern is to answer that charge and help these readers have confidence in what they've been teaching as God's apostles for these many years.

The false teachers are claiming, folks get this now, the false teachers are claiming nothing less than the second coming of Christ is myth. It's just Peter's clever imagination.

If you look with me at chapter 3 of 2 Peter, I'm going to read verses 1 through 4 to bring this out to you. This is now, beloved, the second letter I'm writing to you in which I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember what?

[29 : 21] The words spoken beforehand by whom? The holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. Do you see what he's calling them to here?

I am writing this letter for the primary purpose of calling you to remember the words that have been taught to you and spoken to you by the holy prophets.

That's the Old Testament scripture and your apostles, all that's being written to you now in the way of the New Testament that will be formed as the truth of the New Testament. Now, verse 3.

Know this first of all. This is a saying he likes to come out with. In other words, first importance.

Know this first of all, that in the last days, the days we live in after the cross, mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts.

And here's what they'll say. Verse 4. Where is the promise of his coming? Forever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.

[30 : 31] I have to do it in a mocking way. He said they were mockers. You just do it in the tone of what scripture gives you. For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God, the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

We'll get there, God willing. This is a fascinating place of scripture and what he says next. But don't read ahead. I'm going to ask you to stop reading and come back to me.

This is what's going on. Now look down, if you will, at verse 11 in chapter 3. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way.

He's just explained that everything about the earth is going to melt in fervent heat. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.

Because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning and the elements will melt with intense heat. But according to his promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

[31 : 40] Peter clearly says, oh, he is coming back. I know what they mock. I know what they scoff at and say. He won't. He's not coming. You've been saying this for how many years now, Peter?

You've been saying for 30 years, he's coming, he's coming, he's coming. Well, he's not coming. He's not going to come. This is a cleverly invented way that the apostles are keeping you under their thumb.

This is a clever way that they're getting a fellowship. Now, in actuality, this is exactly the scheme that the false teachers are putting forward. All false teachers desire one thing primarily.

All of them. What is it? I've said it to you many times before in the past, church, a following. False teachers thrive on a following.

Now, what is the difference? God, help me, we get this answer right. What is the difference between false teachers and what, humbly I say to you, Greg and I are trying to do in our shepherding of you.

[32 : 43] What is the primary difference? We are not calling you to follow us primarily. We are primarily calling you to follow Jesus. Even as we say to you, follow us, we hasten to add as we follow Jesus.

If you trust and follow your shepherds, which I pray that is a developing relationship we have together, until we give you reason not to do that from scripture, follow us as we follow Jesus. That is not what the false teachers say. The false teachers are pointing them away from the true shepherds and saying, follow us instead. We'll give you more of what you want. will scratch your itch and they will.

What does the scripture say? They will fall in the last days. They will follow after people who will do what to their ears. That's right. Tickle their ears. Tell them what they want to hear. Tell them what they want to hear.

Well, that's not what Peter is about. So that's what the false teachers are claiming. No second coming. Friends, here's the bottom line. Unbelievers do not want to acknowledge Christ's authority.

[33 : 49] if they can somehow throw off the reality of Jesus as God's son, as Jesus as Lord of creation, all the things that we put forward as we worship this God who gave his life on the cross for us, if they can throw those kinds of things off, they can throw off the idea or the truth, the reality, that they're answerable to their creator and that they will give an account for their lives which terrifies unbelievers as it should.

We don't want to erase that. We want to try to point them to the hope. Do you want to escape the judgment of God? Yes, yes I do. Then trust in the only person that he's given to rescue you from that judgment, Jesus Christ, his precious son.

Come to Christ. Come to faith in Jesus. Learn to devote your life and loyalty to him. Walk with him. His burden is not heavy. It's not a heavy thing for us to suffer for the cross.

It's an affirmation that we belong to him and it brings us joy. Not that we're suffering pain but that the pain proves that we're in the Lord. That we have hope. Hope for a better day.

The truth of Jesus' second coming rests on the authenticity and authority of the apostles' message being God's message through them.

[35 : 18] You see that? It's not just simply because well we say so so believe it. It's we say so because God has given this as his message to be proclaimed through our lives.

That's why we're apostles. We're bringing that message to you and that message is being written down for generations to come as they look back on these events that we are eyewitnesses and earwitnesses of.

So look at what Peter says back to chapter one. We made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We made known friends is the main verb of verse 16. We made known main verb. It carries the force of the action and the main idea of the verse.

The question then is what did the apostles labor to make known to them? Why is Peter laboring this point? Well by the ministry of the Holy Spirit the apostles and the prophets revealed the truth of the powerful coming of Jesus to gather his church to himself and then at one point to make judgment on all of those who have not believed in him.

[36 : 37] Jesus is coming again. That's the point so far. Now the question begs what does that mean for you beloved? What does that mean for you as an individual person sitting in the hearing of my voice right now?

Jesus is coming again. He is coming again. What does that mean for you? Why should you be concerned with that truth?

whether it's tomorrow in an hour from now or a thousand years from now why does Jesus' coming matter to you?

Well Peter says what we've taught you about Jesus' powerful coming isn't based on our own or anyone else's deceptive inventions or speculations but we we were actually eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty.

Now what is Peter referring to when he says that? Are we just to assume that we know that or understand that? If you look with me at verses 17 and 18 for when he received he being Jesus referring back to the Lord Jesus Christ 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.

[38 : 09] You see the remnants of Psalm 2 there? And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. Ah there's some reference points for us to answer the question what is Peter referring to?

I'm going to take you to Matthew chapter 17. Matthew Mark and Luke all record this incident but I'm going to take you to Matthew's gospel 17 beginning in verse 1.

Just hold your finger there and 2nd Peter will come right back to it. Here is the incident Peter is referring to. Six days later Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother and led them up on a high mountain by themselves and he was transfigured changed before them and his face shone like the sun and his garments became as white as light and behold Moses and Elijah appeared to them talking with him Peter said to Jesus Lord it is good for us to be here if you wish I will make three tabernacles here one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah well while Peter was still speaking a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud said this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased listen to him well when the disciples heard this they fell face down to the ground and were terrified and Jesus came to them and touched them and said get up and do not be afraid and lifting up their eyes they saw no one except

Jesus himself alone Peter is telling his readers we have had a preview of what Jesus is second coming will look like he's likening their moment on this mountain when they beheld Jesus gleaming majesty and actually heard the heavenly proclamation of his deity and his lordship he's likening that experience to Jesus his second coming it's very important to the text he's saying look we didn't make any of this up he's insisting that they will not doubt they will not deny they will not scoff at what they saw unheard no matter how much other people ridicule them make fun of them and say you're just making that up no they believe it Peter James and John were eye and ear witnesses witnesses to this majestic glory of

Jesus they have faithfully proclaimed this majesty of Christ as God's son and is coming again in glory and I hope you see what he's doing here I'll say a little bit more about it in just a second now friends think about this with me this is a terrifying reality to those who doubt to all of those people who deny and scoff at Jesus deity at his authority his lordship in life and at his second coming they readily dismiss Jesus his powerful coming because they are rebellious and selfish they want to throw off any idea that they are under the authority of this great God and creator of the universe that's what we do that's what sin does in our hearts they readily dismiss all of that now according according to the apostolic teaching you say what is the apostolic teaching it's called the new testament everything that the apostles are teaching us in the new testament according to apostolic teaching according to the word of

[42 : 28] God Jesus is coming again in great power to receive his church to himself and then to execute judgment on the deeds and hearts of unbelieving people that is coming Jesus then is the hear me the incarnate word that's the main point I've been giving you Jesus is the incarnate word the word of God made flesh yes amen the word of God made flesh let me take you to one other place here in John the gospel of John chapter one we actually had a couple of people mention this on Wednesday night in our discussion and they were correct to turn us to this passage they are helping us understand the connection between Jesus as the living incarnate word and

God's living written word the scripture John chapter one beginning in verse one in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was in the beginning with God who's he talking about yes Christ all things came into being through him and apart from him nothing came into being that was come into being in him was life and the life was the light of men isn't this wonderful how all of this connects when you see Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration his face shone as the sun and his garments became white as light and what is Jesus he is the light of men the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it you see that the world does not comprehend the truth of

Jesus as the savior of the world now if you'll drop your eyes if you would down to verse 14 and the word became flesh and dwelt among us that's Jesus that's the incarnation the incarnate word and we saw his what glory glory as of the only begotten from the father full of grace and truth John the

Baptist testified about him he cried out saying this was he of whom I said he who comes after me has a higher rank than I for he existed before me for of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace for the law was given through Moses grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ no one has seen God at any time the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the father he has explained him how do we see

God the father through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior who is the only begotten of God here we see what I have told you the incarnate word the word made flesh the living truth of God walking as a human being and ministering among us the beautiful is a person Jesus a known God is the living word of God he is god he is truth made flesh Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life this is what Peter and the apostles are testifying to now before I make the transition into point number two I want to say something very critically important to you.

I want us to understand this. What is happening now in the transition from what Peter is saying in verses 16 through 18 about this incarnate living word that they witnessed the glory of on the Mount of Transfiguration.

[46 : 49] Oh, we got a glimpse. We just got a glimpse of what we're going to see as his people when he comes again in power. He came as the lowly servant the first time.

He allowed himself to be spat upon and tortured and killed. When he comes again, he will not come as that servant. He will come as the King of kings and Lord of lords and his glory will be seen in power and in might to take together his people to conquer all the evil that threatened them and bring them into his safe place, his heaven.

The glory of what he's made for us. That is our hope. Now, Peter is saying all of that about what they witnessed in Jesus. Oh, we got a precious glimpse of it. We were eyewitnesses of it.

And there's no denying that. Now, as he makes the transition into the written word, not the incarnate word, but now the written word.

I don't want you to think that Peter is putting them in competition with each other. He's not. He is telling us that we have something even more sure than what he's been talking about.

[48 : 09] And I'll explain that to you. But what he's telling us is this, and this is the point of the passage. So I don't want you to miss it. The point of the passage is this. The transfiguration shows us something of the glory of Jesus Christ in those moments.

And there were there were three men who witnessed it as human beings. But one day, all of humanity will witness the power and glory of the coming and judgment of almighty God in Jesus Christ.

All people will. One day, they'll see that light and that brilliant glory in all of it. This is what the written word testifies to. All of the written word points to the glory of the incarnate word.

And so we have something made even more sure than what we've told you about what we witnessed on that mountain. And that's the entire testimony of the scriptures that bear witness to the reality that Jesus is the son of God, the king of kings, the Lord of lords, and he is coming again. That, that is the point of the passage. That is what Peter is desperate for his people to hold on to, to remember and to hope in. Put your hope in Jesus and in his second coming.

[49 : 29] Believe the scriptures as they testify to the reality of who he is and what he's about to do. It won't be long, friends. It won't be long. You may die and decay and be nothing but worm food in a coffin one day before he comes.

That's fine because to be absent from the body is to be with. Amen. So we won't have to worry about whatever's happening to that old shell. You don't worry about that.

I tell people all the time when I die, however I die, whatever happens, I don't want an open casket. Here's why I don't want it because I don't want you coming by and crying and looking at that thing and saying, Jeff, you know, no, that's not Jeff.

That's not Jeff. That's just a turtle shell. Everything inside the shell's gone. I'm with the Lord. Everything's fine. Cry for you. You're still here.

Let me show you. Let me show you just one verse of scripture that will give you such hope and confidence in what I'm saying about Jesus.

[50 : 32] I probably won't be able to just read one scripture. I'll have to read around it. But nevertheless, turn to John chapter five, beloved, and see what Jesus tells you in his own words about this truth.

The truth that I'm bringing to you now is how the scriptures themselves all testify the reality of what Peter is saying about the Mount of Transfiguration. What we saw on the Mount is what all the scripture testifies to about Jesus.

He's God's son. He's glorious. And one day he's coming again in his glory. Chapter five. Where do I want to start reading?

Let's just look at the context before I read the actual verse I want to show you. Verse 18. For this reason, therefore, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Jesus.

Because he not only was breaking the Sabbath by healing someone, but also was, notice, calling God his own father, making himself equal with God.

[51 : 33] Ooh, they hated that, didn't they? The Jews and the Jewish leaders hated that. Therefore, Jesus answered and was saying to these people, truly, truly, I say to you, the son can do nothing of himself unless it is something he sees the father doing.

For whatever the father does, these things the son also does in like manner. Isn't that good? The father loves the son and shows him all things that he himself is doing.

And the father will show him greater works than these so that you will marvel. Wow. Verse 24.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Isn't that what the entire Bible testifies to? If you drop down to verse 33, you have sent John, John the Baptist, and he has testified to the truth.

But the testimony which I receive is not from man. Did you get that? The testimony of Jesus is not from man. And that's the testimony that Jesus is teaching and passing on to his apostles.

[52 : 49] And that's the testimony they'll bring to us. It's not from men. But I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his great light.

Verse 36. But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John. For the works which the father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, testify about me, that the father has sent me.

And the father who sent me, he has testified of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his form. You do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him whom he sent.

You can't see the father or hear from the father because you can't see me for who I am and hear me for who I am. I'm his son. He sent me. But now notice what he says next.

Here's the point. You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. It is these that testify about me. And you are unwilling to come to me so that you may have life.

[54 : 05] Isn't that the issue, friends? The scriptures testify about me. You search them old and now into the new. This is referring primarily to the Old Testament.

You search the scriptures and you miss me in the search. And in missing me, you miss the father. That's the tragedy. That's the tragedy of religion.

We do not point you to a denomination or religion. We point you to Jesus Christ and him crucified and raised again. So I say again to you, my friends, this is what Peter and the apostles are also testifying to.

Jesus, his person, his works, what he came to say and do. Peter is not asking people to believe the apostles teaching based solely on the apostles.

People's eyewitness experiences. That's not where he stops. Peter's entire defense is based on and has been building toward an even greater reality that he wants them to put their faith in.

[55 : 12] Peter now turns them to what he himself says is even more certain than even his own experiences with Jesus. I love this because I've told you I got you ready for this when I preach the message about how people use God speaking to me and giving me visions and God, you know, saying things to me to tell you and that kind of thing.

And they camp out in their personal experiences if that proves everything. When I'm saying to them, I have no idea how to verify what you're saying to me. And then they and then this happened to me. And then they say this. Well, Jeff, I'm not going to tell you anything that's true unless it jives with the scripture. So just check it with the scripture. And here's what I said.

I think what I'll do is cut out the middleman and just go to the scripture. And I had that paper or plastic moment. Ooh, yes. When that happened to me, I was like, oh, my goodness, there you go.

It's one book. And I just need to refer to the scriptures. I don't I don't have to have people come into me and saying God told me to tell you. God's already told me. I just need to be a diligent student of the scriptures and get into the word of God and be responsible for my faith.

[56 : 25] That's what I need to do. That's what you need to do. Then if we come to each other and we want to talk to each other about what God says, what does Peter tell us? Speak the oracles of God to each other. Don't give each other opinions.

Talk to each other about what's true and encourage each other to follow in the truth. That we cut out the middleman, cut out the opinions. And we're a lot better off in terms of how we're going to be unified, aren't we?

I will never be able to unify you. Greg will never be able to unify you by giving you our opinions. That's just one opinion among 45 others. But as we give you the truth of the Lord and call you to that truth, it puts us literally on the same page, doesn't it?

Oh, this is Peter's point. This is where he's going with all of this. So, again, don't base everything I'm saying just on the fact that we're eyewitnesses. Now turn to this. Turn to this reality.

Seeing and hearing the inspired word. Not just the incarnate word. The inspired word that points to the incarnate word. That's what we want.

[57 : 29] So, we have the prophetic word made more sure. Oh, we heard the majestic glory. Speak on the mountain.

Listen, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. And all honor and glory have been given to this son. We ourselves heard it. We were with him in that very moment.

But now I'm pointing you to something that's even more certain than the eyewitness testimony that we've provided for you because we were there. It's the eyewitness testimony that many prophets and apostles have written about and spoken of because God has called these men out to write these things down for your salvation.

Notice how Peter builds to this point in his argument. 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 rises in your hearts.

But know this, first of all. No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. Nope. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will.

[58 : 42] Nope. But men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. Beloved, I want to share something with you that ministered to my heart. I don't take any credit for it at all.

This is commentator David Helm. David Helm points out that Peter uses what he calls grammatical negatives. Matt and I had a three-hour conversation the other day over at his house about how we use scripture, interpret scripture, and approach scripture, and act as responsible students and are hermeneutic in interpreting the scripture.

And one of the things Matt and I talked about was the importance of grammar and understanding the grammar of scripture and being careful students of the grammar, did we not? Here, David Helm is pointing out grammatical negatives.

We want to lift those out of the text and allow them to help us understand Peter's main emphasis throughout the text. So, let me do this with you. These grammatical negatives, then, frame Peter's main point.

Let me show them to you as they come up here. Notice in verse 16, we did not follow a negative. Verse 20, no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

[59 : 54] Another stated negative. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will. These are the bookends, if you will, both at the front end and the end of this particular passage that help frame the text and the main idea of what Peter wants to communicate to us.

Here's Helm's conclusion. I can't say it any better than him, so I'll just give you the quote. Minister to my heart. On each occasion, Peter positions authority in the post-apostolic era, that's the era we live in, away from people and persons.

And in their place, he puts the very words of God. It will be the words, his emphasis. It will be the words of the biblical apostles and prophets as given to them by the Holy Spirit that provide the lone voice for the faithful after Peter's death.

That's us. Does that make sense to you? I'm looking at you. It's a lot to take in. He's saying we're replacing anything that might be construed as the authority of men and putting it on the authority of what God has said through these men.

It is the Holy Spirit who's worked in the lives of these men to give us the word of God. That's what we're called to put our faith in. The living word of God spoken through these chosen men as God's instruments.

[61 : 22] Now, I know that's going to beg a question, and we'll get to it in just a few minutes. We who live so long after what the apostles witnessed and wrote, some 2,000 years, what Peter is saying to us now is incredibly, incredibly encouraging.

Peter is telling us that what we possess in the word of God is even more sure than the things he saw and the voice he heard on the mountain.

It's not that he's doubting it or downplaying it, but he's recognizing you weren't there. There will be lots and lots of people reading this afterwards as scripture. They weren't there.

So what do they look to? What becomes their certainty and sure hope that the truth is the truth?

Well, what does he say?

We have the prophetic word made more sure. We possess in the word of God a more sure truth than reality.

[62 : 24] These biblical events are established truths. And the way God has communicated his truth to us is written for our welfare.

So we have the even more sure prophetic word is a more literal rendition of this verse. We have the even more sure prophetic word.

And because this word is life and the only authoritative word of God himself, what does he say?

Notice your text again. Look with me. You do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Friends, when Jesus comes again, he will shine in our hearts as we share in his glory. But until then, the word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Amen. Until Jesus comes himself to shine in our hearts, the reality is that God's word is our lamp and our light.

[63 : 31] The Holy Spirit uses God's word to illumine us so that the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ will shine in our hearts by faith.

By faith. By faith. One day that faith will be made complete as we're glorified and brought to Jesus and stand fully before him. And all will be made complete.

Ah, what a glorious moment that will be for all of us. Friends, listen. The main thrust then of this entire passage of everything that Peter has been building to in chapter one.

The main thrust is what he's saying to us right now. This is all that Peter has been saying and all that Peter has been moving to support comes right now.

Here's the hinge. And it's this. You do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts to this prophetic word made more sure.

[64 : 34] It is the calling of God on your life to pay careful and prayerful attention to this word made more sure for you through the prophets and the apostles.

If you want to know what chapter one's about, I just read it to you. Everything builds to that. You. You responsible.

Diligent. Studious. Prayerful. Careful. You do well to pay attention. To that lamp and to that light that is the prophetic word of God made more sure for you because it's written down.

It's written down for your salvation. Sadly. Sadly. Jesus in the truth. Are oftentimes not enough.

We know they're not enough for unbelievers, but boy, what about Christians? The tragedy is that so many professing Christians are taken in by the Jesus plus or the Bible plus errors of our day.

[65 : 44] That's the reality. It is tragic. It is sad. People want to see and hear things from God in personal ways. Okay.

I kind of get that. I kind of understand that if they're saying to me or to Greg as shepherds, I want to know God personally. We would applaud that. We would say, oh, praise the Lord.

Well, then you can know him personally through his son. Amen. That's what we point them to. But so listen to this next part. So many of these professing Christians want to know God in personal ways outside of and in addition to Scripture.

Or even Christ. They seek for signs and visions. They listen for voices. They want to interpret their dreams.

They make their faith about having personal experiences similar to those of the prophets and apostles as they read about what happened to them. And they think that needs to be replicated in

my life if I'm going to have a genuine walk with God.

[66 : 48] That is not where the Bible points us or encourages us to live in our spiritual walk with the Lord, beloved. So if you don't have those experiences, you're not missing out.

You're being protected from. I say that with all humility and love in my heart for us as God's people. I'm not trying to judge or put down people who believe these kinds of things.

I just want to direct them to a sufficient Savior and a sufficient Scripture. Help them better understand what that means for their walk with the Lord. They don't have to seek those kinds of things or experiences.

They don't need them. They're not necessary to a life of godliness with the Lord. They don't add anything to your walk with God. The greater. Look now, folks.

The greater and more sure reality of what God has provided as his voice of direction to help you walk by faith is his written word.

[67 : 45] Testifying to his incarnate word in Jesus Christ, his son. If you'll look with me at verses 20 and 21. But know this first of all.

There's that phrase again that we saw from chapter 3. But know this first of all. No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will.

You might ask, well, how did this process work then? In other words, what does this process of the formation of Scripture mean for me as a Christian? It is critically important for us to underscore what Peter puts down as what he calls a matter of first importance when we answer these questions.

Listen real quick, real carefully. Scripture is not a matter of people making their own interpretations about it. We do not do this at Grace. We do not say, what does it mean to you?

We don't do that. We don't get into our Bible studies or in Wednesday night. And Greg and I don't lead you to look at a passage of Scripture and read that passage. And then say, now, what does this passage mean to each of you?

[68 : 51] What's your opinion about this passage? That is not responsible Bible study. To be quite frank with you, Greg and I are not interested at all in your opinion about the Scripture.

Not one bit. Do you know what Greg and I do when we work hard to study the Bible, to preach and teach it? We try to get Greg and Jeff out of it. I once heard Dr. MacArthur say the hardest work he does in preparing sermons is getting John MacArthur out of it.

He says, I have to stay in the chair until I'm convinced that I've been able to do that by the power of the Spirit. My personality shines through in the way I teach.

Greg's does too. But hopefully, if Greg and I preach the same passage, we preach the same main point. We may do it in slightly different ways, but we're hitting the main point. The Scripture means what it means by what it says.

And we're careful to try and help you unpack that. Here at Grace, we are trying to help steer you away from what the Bible says will ensnare you.

[69 : 57] You need truth. You don't need impressions. You don't need visions. And you don't need ideas or dreams. You need truth. And the truth's been written. Now, how can we help you strip away your biases?

How can we help you overcome your weaknesses? To properly interpret the Bible and live by its truth? Well, we can't answer all those questions in full right now. We're doing more of that kind of thing in our Wednesday evening studies.

And I please just beg you in love to please make a priority of coming on Wednesday nights and joining with us and participating with us in these studies. Here is what Peter is emphasizing.

Listen. Man did not come up to God. That is not what the Bible teaches. Listen carefully, please, to what I say. God came down to man.

Is that not true? Man did not discover a way to write about the history and nature of God. That's not what happened. God decided to reveal himself to men and to lead his chosen men to write about what he taught them about himself.

[71 : 10] There's a big difference between those two things. Discovering and revealing. I was planning on reading this, but I want to draw this to a close.

I'm going to refer you to 1 Corinthians 2, verses 10 through 16. If you read the whole chapter, you'd be better off. 1 Corinthians 2, 10 through 16.

All right? My plan is to read that on Wednesday night. So I'm going to save that. For those of you who will come on Wednesday night, we'll do more with that.

Let me just say this as I move toward a close. Scripture is not an invention of man.

The God-honoring interpretation of Scripture does not depend on the cleverness of a person, but on the Holy Spirit at work within the person to open their hearts to the truth.

[72 : 07] And so Peter challenges and encourages his readers, Remember the truths of your faith, the truths taught and fought for by God's prophets and apostles. Peter wants to turn, turn them to the most trusted source that God gave for growing them in his grace and in his knowledge.

It's God's more sure prophetic word, or we could say it this way, his more sure Scripture. Hey, Jeff, boy, you're banging on about that. Well, that's what Peter's banging on about, too. That's what he's saying throughout chapter 1.

He's reminding them and grounding them, because what he's coming with next is a nuclear blast against the false teachers. And he wants them to hold on.

When that blast happens, he wants them to be rooted so that they can stand, and it hits, they can stand against that thing and be standing when it's all done. And maybe the false teachers will be blown away.

Just as an analogy. For centuries, as I close, for centuries, faithful Christians have lived and died defending the inspiration, authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture, among other doctrines.

[73 : 18] This is the way that I concluded a paper on this topic for my degree that I was working on the last four years or so. I finally was able to graduate in the summer, last summer. So I want to offer this as my conclusion for this message.

For those of you who showed up Wednesday night, this is the way that I concluded the paper that Greg was referencing throughout that evening, that dealt with the first questions that we're unpacking.

All right? So this is what I want to close with. This is what I said. We can trust the Bible because God wrote it. Inspiration holds that He wrote it for us and for our instruction.

Inerrancy guarantees us that God protected His written word from error so that it's trustworthy. And the Bible is authoritative and binding on our lives because God means for Scripture to be His final word of truth by which we understand, measure, and live all of life to please Him in all respects.

And I give the respective Scripture references for each of those statements. The Bible is God's word. We can trust it. I think we can refine the old adage that we've heard.

[74 : 33] God said it. I believe it. That settles it. I think we could skip the middle part and just say this. God said it. That settles it. Whether I believe it or not doesn't change the fact that it's God's word.

Amen? Beloved, be encouraged. And take heart from Peter as he tells us that we have a sufficient word to lead us in glorifying Jesus.

Let's pray together. Well, Father, I thank You for these moments that we can share together about the Scriptures and share together in the truth that You've given us in the written word.

The written word that points us to and expresses the incarnate word, the Jesus, the Logos of God. God made flesh in human form and dwelt among us.

Thank You for Jesus. Thank You for the testimony of His life. If there's anyone here this morning who is struggling with whether or not they have a saving and personal relationship with Jesus, if there's anyone here who is doubting whether or not they are saved and will escape Your judgment when You come again, I pray that You will move them to come and speak with Greg or myself or one of our wives.

[75 : 54] that they will come and make today the day that they settle those issues in their heart. We're available here for them, Lord. And we have a desire to speak with them and to see them living in the confidence of knowing Jesus.

I pray now that You will help my brothers and sisters and myself to take these wonderful and encouraging truths about the word that we live by and that lives in us.

And we will take that into our everyday life at the grocery store this week, into our jobs, into the travels that we make, and the people that we encounter.

Help us to stop long enough to remember that we are ambassadors for Jesus and we are left on this earth to make disciples in His name. Thank You for this great honor and privilege.

Help us to be thankful through the week as we minister to each other and to You. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.