

The Certain Word

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] Last week we primarily focused on 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 9-15.

! In that passage we saw that God wants believers to know that we are saved. Verses 9-15 are part of the larger section that started with verse 3.

And we summarize verses 3-15 like this. Christ has given believers everything they need for life and godliness and has called them by His powerful grace.

And such grace serves as an incentive for a godly life of virtue. And a life of godliness is necessary for entering the eternal kingdom. Remember that such a godly life is not the earning of salvation, but it's the evidence that salvation truly belongs to the person.

It also is the human means by which salvation is realized. It gives us evidence that we're saved as well. And Peter was compelled to remind us of these facts both before and after his death.

[1 : 09] Peter was not so much concerned about whether his readers remembered the facts of the faith. Peter's concern was that the facts continue to make a difference in their lives as they live for Christ.

And in that sense he asked the Christians to remember in the same way as all Christians including us need to keep remembering the core of the gospel. You know that it's so easy in Christian life, especially if there are some false teachers around as there were in this church, to move away from the root of the faith.

So Peter is trying to protect the readers from those false teachers. We also saw that no Christian has the right to forget the core of Christ's gracious work for us.

The more we remember what Christ has done for us and continues to do for us, then the better we will live for him and the more we will seek to respond in love and obedience to him.

We're going to finish chapter 1 tonight by looking at verses 16 through 21. Peter's biggest emphasis in this passage is on the certain word, the certain word of God that we find in scripture.

[2 : 17] So let's go ahead and read verses 16 through 21. They say, At first, these verses seem to be unrelated to what we've covered so far.

in chapter 1, but the verses actually have a strong connection. In verses 12 through 15, Peter resolved before his death to remind his readers of the truth of the gospel, and he focused especially on the need to live virtuously so that they would enter the heavenly kingdom.

That was in verses 5 through 11. And then the call to virtue is grounded in God's saving work and should never be dismissed as works righteousness. And then here in verses 16 through 21, Peter began to respond to those who were deflecting his readers from their eternal reward.

The false teachers doubted the future coming of Jesus Christ, and they were saying that life would go on as it always has. We'll see that in more detail when we get to chapter 3.

But if there's no second coming or judgment, Peter's emphasis on pursuing godliness diligently in order to receive an eternal reward actually collapses.

[4 : 18] So that makes living a godly life optional, to say the least, if a heavenly destiny is fiction.

So in chapter 2, Peter is going to describe in vivid terms why the proponents of such error are doing what they're doing, and he's going to explain to his readers so that they can understand and better recognize the danger.

It's not enough to be merely aware of the false teachers. Believers need to know how to defend against their errors, and we're going to see that the primary weapon in that defense is God's word.

And in tonight's passage, the apostle references both his own eyewitness experience of revelation and God's supernatural written revelation that we have today.

So false teachers label the truths that Christians believe as make-believe, fiction, or even just simply stories. They claim the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the resurrection, and his coming kingdom

were only invented stories.

And in the first section of our lesson tonight, Peter demolishes those false allegations. In verses 16 through 18, Peter summarizes the proclamation of the witnesses.

[5 : 30] The proclamation of the witnesses is the first thing we see, and that comes in verses 16 through 18. So let's look at that proclamation one more time.

Peter wrote, These verses are an obvious reference to the transfiguration.

And before we dive into the second Peter verses, let's reacquaint ourselves with what happened with the transfiguration. If you want to, go ahead and flip over to Mark chapter 9.

We'll go ahead and read verses 2 through 9. They summarize the transfiguration. Again, that's Mark chapter 9, verses 2 through 9.

And Mark summarized the transfiguration like this. He said, And after six days, And one for Moses and one for Elijah.

[7 : 18] For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, This is my beloved son. Listen to him.

And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

The transfiguration also is recorded in both Matthew and Luke. And in all three of these gospels, the transfiguration is placed in the context of Jesus beginning to teach his disciples that he was going to have to suffer and die.

What the disciples were being taught was that through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus really was the route to glory. The second coming of Jesus, though, would be fundamentally different from his first coming.

Instead of humbling himself and limiting the exercise of his divine attributes, and instead of coming to suffer and die, his return the second time will be a sovereign Lord and King with full power and majesty.

[8 : 29] And the transfiguration offered the disciples a foretaste of that glory. It showed them a glimpse through to the future, all the way through to the suffering and death, and the resurrection, and all the way into Christ's glorification.

And this really matches what we've been studying from the Apostle Paul on Sunday mornings when we've been looking at Philippians 2, 5-11 with Pastor Mike. So with all that as the backdrop, let's go back to 2 Peter and look at verses 16-18 of chapter 1 in more detail.

Just as a reminder, verse 16 says, For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

And of course we saw from the verses we just read in Mark just how prominent an eyewitness Peter was of the transfiguration. And before we dig into the verse much, we know more than just Peter's teaching was under attack.

Because Peter's choice of pronouns shows that false teachers also were attacking the teaching of the other apostles. If you look back just up the page to verses 12-15, you see that Peter's pronouns were all singular.

[9 : 43] Everyone was either I or me. In verse 16, though, he switches to a plural pronoun when he uses the word we over and over. And Peter says that the apostles avoided cleverly devised fables.

Cleverly devised means sophisticated or subtly concocted ideas. The expression also refers to anything clandestine or deceitful.

Seeking to devour the sheep, the false teachers would disguise their lies to make them appear as divine truth. When he used the word mist, mist there refers to legendary stories of gods and heroic figures participating in miraculous events and performing extraordinary feats.

And these tales characterize pagan mythology and worldview. Peter flatly denied that he was drawing upon such fictitious stories when he made known his teaching.

We can assume that the false teachers had told Peter's readers that the Christian faith and doctrine was just another set of myths and fables. When he talks about making known something there, the term made known is often used in the New Testament to speak of imparting new revelation.

[11 : 00] In this instance, the revelation concerned the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Peter's talking about Christ's second coming in glory and dominion. The terms power and

coming need to be interpreted together.

And they speak of the powerful coming of Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns, he will return in power. And at least twice now I've said that the phrase power and coming refers to the second coming of Christ.

So let's talk about how we can be sure that that's the case. Because Peter connected the phrase power and coming with the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's a sure indicator that Peter was referring to Christ's return or his second coming.

Because as we already know, Christ's first coming was in meekness and humility. There'd been no greater evidence during Jesus' whole lifetime of both his power and his majesty than the transfiguration that was recorded for us in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Peter reminds his readers that he and others were eyewitnesses to that event. We always need to remember that our faith doesn't rest on clever stories, as did the doctrines of the false teachers that Peter attacked.

[12:14] Instead, true faith is found on historical facts, which eyewitnesses corroborated. Peter says that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses to Christ's majesty.

And majesty there can also be translated splendor, grandeur, or magnificence. It's elsewhere used in the New Testament to identify the greatness of God. So it's no accident there that Peter used the term majesty to describe Jesus.

He's using it to show that Jesus is God. Remember that Jesus had predicted that some of the apostles would see the manifestation of his divine greatness.

In Matthew 16, 28, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Moving on now, we'll take verses 17 and 18 together. They form one long sentence. And they say, For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

[13:22] We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. The words honor and glory naturally hang together there.

Glory is a word that is especially linked with Christ's second coming in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But all the way back in Psalm 8, 5 in the Old Testament, the two words honor and glory are seen together in a messianic prediction.

So listen to Psalm 8, 5. It says, Yet you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned him with honor and glory. And that psalm is taken up and applied to Christ in Hebrews 2, verses 7 and 9.

And when that happens, Christ now has all authority and is crowned with glory and honor. So here are Hebrews 2, 7 and 9. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, You made him for a little while lower than the angels.

You have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside of his control.

[14:31] At present we do not see everything in subjection to him, but we see him for a little while who was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering and death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

So you can see how the writer to the Hebrews tied together the Old Testament and the New Testament, and Peter's doing the same thing to show that Jesus is the Christ that the Old Testament predicted.

Peter's stressing that the words of the Father helped the apostles see the kingly divine rule of Christ, which was still yet to come. So what were the words of the Father that the disciples heard? Yeah, this is my beloved son. And in using these words, the Father is alluding to two Old Testament texts, and they're full of meaning in their own right.

The first is Psalm 2-7, and there the God, the Father, speaks to the Son who will come to rule the nations. And this recalls the wonderful covenant that God made with David in 2 Samuel 7-14, and that's where God promised that one day a king will sit on David's throne to rule forever.

[15:42] So the background to the second part of this statement, that God said, and that is, with whom I am well pleased, is also fascinating. It's drawn from Isaiah 42-1, and Isaiah 42-1 speaks of the suffering servant, but it also points to the servant's role in bringing justice to all the nations.

So here is Isaiah 42-1. Isaiah wrote, Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. And of course Isaiah wrote it, but it's actually God the Father speaking there. And Peter's reference to Isaiah 42-1 makes it clear that the Father was stressing that this Jesus was the one he had chosen to be the king.

And Jesus' calling and work, including his future role of judgment, was all part of the Father's will. In 2 Peter, then, the verse 18 of chapter 1 explains why the transfiguration is such an important element of Jesus' second coming.

The important thing about the transfiguration lies in both what the apostles saw and in what they heard. They had seen the glory of the Son, but they'd also heard God the Father from his majestic glory, identifying Jesus as the one appointed to be king and to fulfill the role of authority and judgment over the nations.

[17:08] And Peter calls people to remember God's truth, which is the gospel, and especially the second coming, because of what the apostles had heard and seen in the transfiguration.

They saw that Jesus was the Son, the long-awaited promise, and the long-awaited king of glory and ruler of the world. They also heard that he was both servant and judge, and the day of the transfiguration was just a foretaste of Christ's future glory and his rule and his power and his honor. So Peter was convinced of the truth he taught because he had personally experienced it. He also spoke for other apostles and New Testament authors when he said that we do not follow cleverly devised tales.

All of them actually received supernatural revelation, verifying that they were taught correctly and verifying that what they subsequently preached was the truth.

So there's no reason for Peter's audience then or now to believe the false teachers who deny the glorious future return of Jesus. The false teachers are actually heretics who were not present on the Mount of Transfiguration.

[18:15] But we know that Peter was an eyewitness to the second coming majesty. He, James, and John saw Moses and Elijah affirm Christ, and above all, the apostles heard God himself honor his son.

So when you think about it, eyewitness testimony is a good defense against false teachers.

Certainly we all would have liked to have been there to see what went on, but Peter is going to go on now to tell us we have no need to feel slighted because Peter reminds us that we have something even better than being there for the transfiguration.

And in verses 19 through 21, we see the priority of the word. So the priority of the word is the second thing we'll look at tonight.

It sounds hard to believe at first, but what Peter is saying is that the written word is even better to being an eyewitness to Christ's glory. So let's look at verses 19 through 21 again.

They say, And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will 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, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

[19:35] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. As accurate as they were in declaring the truth, God didn't depend solely on the oral eyewitness accounts of the apostles.

Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, God superintended the recording of these experiences and thoughts into the inspired revelation of Scripture. Peter's reply then to those who would question the validity of his experience is that believers have an even better source, and that's the prophetic word more fully confirmed.

In other words, the word of God. God himself has repeatedly emphasized that his inspired word is inerrant, infallible, and all-sufficient.

It's the source of truth which doesn't require human confirmation. And here are just a few cross-references to show that. Starting with Psalm 19.7. Psalm 19.7 says, The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. Later on in Psalms, Psalm 119.60 says, The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

[20:56] In the New Testament, in his high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed these words to God. He said, Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

And then Paul wrote these words in 1 Thessalonians 2.13. He said, And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. We can't see it from the English rendering of 2 Peter 2.19, but the word translated as we in verse 19 is significant. The we in verse 19 is not the same emphatic pronoun that's listed in verse 18, where it refers to Peter, James, and John.

Instead, the use in verse 19 refers generically to all believers. So as a group, all believers possess the word, the source of God's truth that's far more reliable than collective experience, even the experience of the apostles.

And so, of course, because that we refers to all believers, it includes us as well. So what Peter is saying is that we have something even better than the eyewitness experience of the apostles.

[22 : 17] How often do you really stop to think about the Bible that way? It puts it in an even different and even better perspective, doesn't it, when you think of it like that?

But that's consistent, too, with how the Jews viewed Scripture. The Jews always preferred Scripture to the voice from heaven. And as for the apostles, it's hard to overemphasize their regard for the Old Testament.

One of the most powerful arguments for the truth of Christianity was the argument from prophecy. And if you notice in Acts and in Romans and 1 Peter 2, Hebrews and Revelation, how much we see quoted from the Old Testament.

They don't just tell you what they think. They tell you how what they're writing ties back to the Old Testament and therefore is proven by the Old Testament predictions. In the Word of God written, the apostles sought absolute assurance just like their master did.

Because think about how Jesus answered the temptation in the wilderness. Every time Satan tempted him, what did Jesus tell him? He always said, it is written.

[23 : 26] He went back to Scripture. He could have said, well, listen to me. I'm God. Here's what you need to do. That would have been true, too. But instead, he went back to the written Word and said, it is written.

And we find out why Scripture can be even better than the eyewitness accounts of the apostles when we look at 2 Timothy 3.16. Here's 2 Timothy 3.16.

It says, all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. The expression of the prophetic word in Peter's day embraced the entire Old Testament, but it also extends beyond the passages of predictive prophecy to include all the inspired word of Scripture, which in general anticipated the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus himself affirmed that reality when he said, you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, but it is they that bear witness about me.

And that is John 5.39. So while Jesus was primarily speaking of Old Testament Scripture, the words aren't limited to that because Scripture is Scripture and what is true of the Old Testament is also true of New Testament Scripture because later on in 2 Peter, we'll see that Peter refers to the writings of Paul as Scripture as well.

[24 : 53] Peter goes on to say that because the Word of God is better than eyewitness testimony, we should pay attention to it. And Charles Spurgeon summarized Peter's urging like this.

He said, That's an interesting sentence, isn't it?

Those things that we have received by faith, we now have proved to be true by their effect upon our own souls. Then he went on to say, We know the light now because we walk in it. We know it to be light for it has enlightened us.

And Spurgeon's references to the lamp, the day dawning, and the morning star rising come directly from 2 Peter 1.19. The world as we know it now is a world full of uncertainties in which people are desperately trying to discover what the future holds.

Think about all the things that people today turn to to try to predict the future. You know, we have horoscopes, we have the occult, we have New Age religions, and we even have even stranger religious sects that really are all symptoms for us of an age that still struggles in darkness.

[26 : 22] We have something different, though. We have revelation, which is God's own word on the matter, and that word is to be trusted and listened to. That's because God's word offers for us a firm and solid foundation for living in this world where ignorance of God's word and the future leaves people lost in darkness.

So even though we do not yet see face to face and even though we may not understand all that will happen when Christ returns, Christians do have God's word on the matter.

Jesus will return to judge those who have rejected him and to save those who belong to him by grace through faith. By talking about the morning star, Peter likely is referring to Numbers 24-7, which is another messianic prophecy.

Numbers 24-17, says, I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.

It shall cross the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. So again, that was Numbers 24-17. The context there talks of judgment that will be brought to the nations by one of the descendants of Jacob.

[27 : 36] But this morning star, which of course is Jesus, will not produce fear in the hearts of his followers. Instead, his followers will know Jesus fully and their hearts and whole lives will be filled with joy.

Looking at 2 Peter 1, verse 20 now, Peter elaborates on why Scripture is better than eyewitness testimony. He says, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

False teachers spoke of their own things from their own ideas, but no true message of God ever arose from a human interpretation. And Peter's not referring to the explanation of Scripture there, but to the origin of Scripture.

Peter's insisting on the full authority of Scripture because the origin of all that is said by the prophets is from the Holy Spirit himself. Against everybody who would say otherwise, Peter argues that the prophets were not simply making up something to fit the times or to interpret an experience or to make a point based upon their own assessment of things.

Instead, the prophets were carried or born along by the Holy Spirit so that what they spoke was actually from God. And we see that from verse 21. Verse 21 says, For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 02] So what did Peter do before he became an apostle? He was a fisherman and he's actually using a fisherman analogy here. He's using a picture of a vessel being blown along as the wind fills its sails.

You know, every author of a Bible book or letter used his own individual style of recording and writing, but the finished product was not an invention or creation of that particular individual.

The authors may not have realized it at the time, but God the Holy Spirit was working through their minds and personalities as he carried them along to produce the unique word of God. J. Vernon McGee said, It's wonderful to see how God could take each man and use him without changing his style or interfering with his personality to write God's word so that God's message comes across. While Paul the Apostle wrote eloquent Greek, Peter the Apostle, because he was a fisherman and Greek was a second language, wrote Greek that was not quite as good. Yet God used both of these men to write exactly what he wanted to say, so much so that if God spoke out of heaven today, he would have to repeat himself because he has already said all that he has to say to mankind.

I thought that's an interesting way to put it. If God spoke from heaven today, he'd have to repeat himself because he's already said everything that he wanted to say. So God has gotten his word too through us using men of different personalities and of different skills.

[30 : 34] And when conservative theologians talk about the source of scripture, they refer to verbal plenary inspiration. And we'll break that term down and talk about what they mean. By verbal inspiration, they mean that the words as originally penned by the 40 or so human writers were God-breathed.

So God did not give them a general outline or some basic ideas and then let the writers phrase what they wished. Instead, the very words that they wrote were given by the Holy Spirit, even though they wrote them in their own style.

And by plenary inspiration, they mean all the Bible is equally God-given. So from Genesis through Revelation, it's the word of God. And we also hold, of course, that the Bible is inerrant.

And by inerrant, we mean that the resultant word of God is totally without error in the original, not only in doctrine, but in history, science, chronology, and all other areas that it speaks to.

Charles Spurgeon said this. He said, Peter said that this prophetic book, the Bible, in which Holy Scripture is stored up, is better to us than if we had even seen Christ himself.

[31 : 45] If any one thing is to be more sure than another, it is this blessed revelation of the Christ of God. Peter was with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and nothing could shake Peter's conviction that he had been there in the midst of that heavenly glory.

And yet, for all that, he felt that even the memory of that vision, which he had assuredly seen, did not always yield to him so much assurance as did the invitingly inspired word of God, you ought to feel the same.

You know, it's interesting that God chose someone there on the Mount of Transfiguration to say that God's word is more important than what was seen on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Because, if you think about it, what if somebody else had said God's word is more important than being there on the mountain? If somebody who said that he wasn't there, it might be hard to believe that.

But Peter was there. He actually saw it. He would be really tempted to say, hey, you ought to listen to me. I was there. I know what I'm talking about. Instead, he's saying, don't just take my word for it. Look at what Scripture says.

[32 : 55] So, Peter's insistence here is that his readers must pay attention to Scripture, to the prophetic word. And that's very important for us today. Together, with Peter's original audience, we also live in anticipation of the second coming.

And if we're ever tempted to doubt this, as Peter's readers were, then we must remember that the second coming is part and parcel of the gospel message preached by the apostles. They saw the glorified Christ in all his majesty, and they also heard the Father himself give honor and glory to the Son.

And the prophetic word, which is the Old Testament teaching, is also quite certain on this point. The apostles taught this truth not as an optional extra, but as a core part of the gospel.

And from this truth come all sorts of other important lessons for the church today. And one of the most important is that having this light shining in a dark place means that we must live as people of the light.

In other words, we look forward to Christ's return, and we behave now as people who are awaiting him. In Peter's terms, we need to be all the more diligent to confirm our calling and election so that we'll receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom.

[34 : 10] Perhaps we all need to ask ourselves again just how much we consider the second coming of the Lord to be core gospel that's relevant for us day by day. Certainly, Bible-believing Christians trust that Christ will return, but to what extent do we live in the light of that truth, and to what extent do we let it govern our lives?

And also, to what extent do we share that truth with other people? In chapter 1 that we just finished up, Peter outdid himself in reminding us of our exalted standing in Jesus Christ.

As a result of our personal relationship with Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, each of us has the wonderful privilege of growing up in the faith and being transformed into people who truly reflect the character of the Savior.

The scriptures reflect the word of God, regarding the wonderful position that every believer already enjoys. As strong as the encouragement and the assurances of chapter 1 are, the warning is just as strong because Peter also said that if we as followers of Christ have little inclination or energy for spiritual growth and transformation, we may be Christians in theory, but not necessarily in fact.

At the very least, if we are Christians, we have forgotten exactly what it is that Jesus has done for us. So this letter keeps bringing us back to the central truth already, and that's reaffirmed and attested by the transfiguration of Jesus Christ and the sure and certain word of the scriptures.

[35 : 38] So if we follow the majestic and glorious Christ whom Peter presents in this chapter, and if we take seriously the spirit-crafted scriptures, then our mandate is clear. Our eyes are to be focused on our glorious Savior, and he's the one we're to follow and live for, and he's the one that we should tell others about.

So how can we always be mindful of the fact that we are to follow and live for Christ? Well, not surprisingly, the answer goes back to scripture itself.

And remember the familiar words of Psalm 119, 105. It says, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. So the next time you have any doubts about the Bible and you wish you'd seen more evidence of what actually happened, remember that the Bible says that we have something that's even better than being there ourselves.

Thank you.