
“The Authenticity of Scripture”

2 Peter 1:12-21

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¹²So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

¹⁹We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Peter begins this section, encouraging Christians to remember. In verse 12 he says that he will always remind you of these things. Then in verse 13 he says he wants to refresh their memory. Finally, at the end of verse 15 he says to them again to remember these things. What ‘things’ is he referring to? What are the things Christians should be constantly reminding themselves of? It’s what Peter spoke about in the previous verses. He spoke of growing in the faith, of persevering in the faith. Remember the Christian virtues he wrote about like godliness and goodness and self-control and brotherly love, just to name a few. We are to be growing in these virtues, day by day, year after year. In fact, this growth is so important that it confirms our very calling and election. Remember what we said last week that if we grow in these things then we will never stumble. We won’t trip up and fail to enter heaven.

So, Peter says, “I will always remind you of these things,” and listen to what he says after that. “Even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.” This is remarkable and is very useful for all of us. Peter is very confident in the quality of the faith of the Christians he is writing to. He says, “the things I’ve told you, you already know, I’ve told you before, it’s nothing new.” So, these Christians know the truth, they’ve been through Peter’s discipleship class. And then he says that they’ve been “firmly established in that truth.” That means that they have a stable foundation, it’s set, it’s fixed. You might even say, it’s a description of spiritual maturity.

What then do you say to mature Christians? What do you say to Christians who know the basics of the faith, and are rooted and established in them? What is it that you tell them, over and over again, to their dying breath? What is it that a pastor tells the people in his church over and over again, to his dying breath?

That's what Peter is showing us here. He says that while he remains alive, he will keep telling them of these things, and even when he's gone, and he knows that day is coming soon, he will continue to say the same thing. That's why he's written it down. This is like Peter's last will and testament. It's the most important things he wants to say before he passes away. I remember visiting a dying saint and some of his adult children happened to be there. They had drifted from the faith and his words to them were, "Go back to church."

Peter's message is this: persevere in the faith. Keep growing in the faith. Don't give up. Don't stop growing. Don't stop putting in the effort to mature in Christ. In a very real sense, that's how we know if a person is a genuine Christian. Once a person says, "I don't really have much more growing to do." Or "I haven't grown much since the year 2000." That just might a sign that he or she was never a Christian to begin with. True Christians are those that persevere; those that continue to put in the effort. Now let me be clear. It's not by my effort to grow that I become a Christian. We become Christians solely by faith in the completed work of Christ on the cross. But we prove that our faith is real and genuine, by our constant effort and growth in those previously mentioned virtues.

Years ago, I read a book on pastoral ministry called "Working the Angles" by Eugene Peterson. He's passed away now, but he's the one who translated a paraphrase of the Bible called "The Message." In that book he described three aspects of pastoral ministry. Ministry of the Word. Ministry of Prayer. And providing spiritual direction to people. He went on to say that a pastor's job in a real sense is not primarily to 'grow the church' or to be the church's CEO. "In these communities of sinners, one of the sinners is called pastor and given a designated responsibility in the community. The pastor's responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God." So, when the church gathers every Sunday and the pastor preaches, and even when he meets in private with church members, in a sense what he's doing is exhorting and encouraging his flock to stay in the game, to not give up, and to tell them to press on together. I think he's right. Isn't that in essence what's going on when the church gathers? Isn't that what happens when the community of Christ acts as the community of Christ? When there's a struggling marriage, what do we say? Hang in there. Don't give up. When we have wayward children, what do we say? Hang in there. Don't give up. When we struggle with remaining single, what do we say? Hang in there. Don't give up. When we struggle with all the temptations of life, what do we say? Hang in there. Don't give up. Let's continue to be that kind of community. Let's continue to remind each other to press on, to grow, to mature, to love and to serve, in essence, to be Christians, to be the church.

Let's move on. This brings us to verse 16. As Peter now knows that his departure from this world is near. Legend has it that Peter died by being crucified upside down. Peter tells us about the reliability of his message. And he gives three reasons for why they should believe the message he has been speaking to them.

The first reason is eyewitness testimony. The second is Old Testament prophetic fulfillment and the third is the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Peter says that his message doesn't come from cleverly devised stories. This isn't a myth, a tall tale. It's not a made-up story. Rather, he says, "We saw it with our own eyes." What was it that they saw? He says, "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying,

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”

The word for ‘majesty’ here means greatness or magnificence, but it’s used only of divine majesty, a majesty or greatness of a god. So, Peter is saying, that he and his two companions saw the divine majesty of Jesus on top of that mountain.

But let’s go back to the original account recorded for us in Matthew 17.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” ⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. **(Matthew 17:1 - 8)**

Just consider with me the many witnesses to the divinity of Jesus. We have Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, who was told by an angel that the child in Mary came about by the miracle of the Holy Spirit. Matthew interprets that event like this. The child will be called Immanuel which means, “God with us.” He’s one of the first witnesses to the divinity of Jesus.

In Luke, the story begins with Mary. An angel told her that the child in her would be called “the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” Here’s a second witness to the divinity of Jesus.

There was John the Baptist. He too was a witness. He saw Jesus for the first time and declared, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” That’s another testimony of the divinity of Jesus.

Then throughout his public ministry, Jesus did things that testified to his divinity. He forgave sins, something only God could do. He cast out demons. He gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. He raised the dead. He displayed power over the realm of creation by calming the storm and walking on water. These were all displays of his divinity, and there were eyewitnesses who saw these things.

But all of these witnesses of his divinity were veiled behind his humanity. They were hidden behind the frailty of his human flesh. There is only one instance where that veil was removed. Only one time in his time on earth did Jesus pull back the curtain and show others who he truly was in his nature. It was at his transfiguration.

At the transfiguration, Jesus morphed, he changed into the fullness of his glory, the glory that would be his for all eternity. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light. So here, Peter recalls that unforgettable event. Isn't it interesting that of all the remarkable events of Jesus' life and ministry, he mentions this one? This is the apex moment where the true nature and full glory of Jesus was revealed. How could Peter ever forget such a memory. So, he's telling the Christians, "I was there! With my own two eyes, I saw Jesus become unveiled and I saw his heavenly glory." This is why you can trust my message. This is why you can believe what I'm saying. I know of whom I speak!

Now let's look at the second reason, which is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Look to verse 19. He says, "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable." The NASB says it like this. "So, we have the prophetic word made more sure."

One Old Testament scholar says that there are 574 verses in the Old Testament that have a direct personal messianic foretelling. There are 348 verses that allude to or speak directly of Jesus' first or second coming. Another scholar (W. Kaiser) says that there are 65 direct predictions in the Old Testament of Jesus coming into the world. There are at least six undisputed predictions in the Pentateuch. Genesis 3:15; 9:27; 12:2-3; 49:8-12; Numbers 24:15-19; and Deuteronomy 18:15-18.

In addition to those there are five prophecies around the time of King David. He is called the "Anointed" in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, and faithful priest in 1 Samuel 2:35-36. But the most explicit is found in 2 Samuel 7, when God makes a covenant with David, saying that David's descendant would have an eternal throne and an eternal kingdom.

Consider all the messianic psalms. Psalm 11 speaks of the person and work of the coming Messiah. Psalm 118 predicts his rejection. Psalm 69 and 109 that he would be betrayed. Psalm 22 and 16 predicts that he would die and rise again, and so on. Listen to a few excerpts from Psalm 22:

- ¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
- ² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
- ⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
- ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD," they say,
"let the LORD rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him."
- ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.
- ¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

- 16 Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.
- 17 All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.
- 18 They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

Then finally, there are 39 specific predictions of the coming Messiah in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The most well-known is that he would be born of a virgin in Isaiah 7:14. His birthplace would be Bethlehem in Micah 5:2. John the Baptist would be his forerunner in Isaiah 40:3-5 and Malachi 3:1.

But there are more prophecies still. Some details that are just unbelievable. Zechariah 12:10 says that the Messiah's side would be pierced.

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

The most famous Messianic chapter, Isaiah 53, tells us that he would suffer for the sins of the world. Isaiah 53 even tells us that he will be killed with wicked ones, which ended up being the two criminals on either side of Jesus.

Shall we go on? Daniel 7:13 says that the Messiah would return to earth a second time and that he would rule the as King of kings.

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

To the Apostle Peter, his testimony, his eyewitness account of Jesus is a good reason to trust the authenticity of his words, but he says, look to the prophets of old. This is what Jesus must have done with those disciples he met after his resurrection on the road to Emmaus. Remember his gentle rebuke.

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. **(Luke 24:25-27)**

This is why we can trust the message of the Bible. There is no other book like it, that has so many prophecies come true, culminating in a single person, Jesus Christ.

The final reason to trust the authenticity of the Scriptures is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Look to verse 20-21:

²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Now, this is very important for us all to understand. The source of prophecy is not found within the prophet. It's not his words, it's not even his interpretation of God's words. The prophet's job is not to communicate what he thinks God meant in his words. No, the prophet's job is to speak verbatim, the exact words of God. That's why the introductory formula of a prophecy are the words, "Thus says the Lord!"

Peter here tells us that they spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Even when we come to the New Testament Scriptures, we are told, by Jesus himself, that it will be Holy Spirit that will continue doing what he has always done.

John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 15:26 "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

We all know very well that verse in 2 Timothy 3:16 where Paul says, "All Scripture is God-breathed," meaning that the origin, the source of Scripture is God himself. So that's the third reason for why we can trust the Scriptures. Scripture comes from God, the Holy Spirit.

Now, I know that I said there were three reasons for believing in the authenticity of Scripture: Eyewitness testimony. Fulfilled prophecy. And the origin being from the Holy Spirit. But I think there is a fourth reason we should believe the authenticity of the message. Peter's life and death. Peter said earlier that Jesus himself told him that his time was coming to an end. This wasn't the first time he heard about dying for Jesus. Jesus told Peter and all his disciples many times that they would be persecuted. Jesus said that if they persecuted him, then certainly they will persecute his followers. He also said that in order to be a disciple of Christ, you would have to deny himself and take up your cross and follow him. The German martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it like this. "When Jesus bids a man come, he bids him come and die." But, do you remember when Peter denied Jesus three times. Then Jesus went to the cross and resurrected and it was time to get Peter back on track. He asked Peter, do you love me? Three times he asked him. And three times Peter replied, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." Then Jesus said, feed my sheep.

And immediately after that, Jesus said to Peter,

¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, **“Follow me!”**

Peter knew his entire life that he would die for Christ. And now, the time for his death had come. Peter had lived his entire life for Jesus. And now he was going to die for Jesus. So, would someone die for a lie? If the life, death and resurrection of Jesus was a lie, a hoax, then is it logical that someone would die for that lie? Would even knowing that you would have been found out to be a fraud, the shame, the disgrace that you're entire life was a lie...would you still hold on to that lie, if it was a matter of life and death. If all Peter needed to do was to recant his faith to live, if it was for a lie, wouldn't he have come clean? But he doesn't do that. He goes to his death. Why? Because he knows it is true. He saw Jesus with his own eyes. He ate with him, ministered alongside of him. He saw all the miracles. He heard all the teaching. He walked on the water. He even went up the mount of transfiguration and saw Jesus morph into his glorified form, but also, he knows the message is true because Jesus is the fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies written centuries before. He knows that these prophecies do not have their origin in man, but in God the Holy Spirit. He knows that Jesus alone saves. He knows that there is no other name that can reconcile sinful humans to God. That's why he was willing to die a horrific death. He knew not only what awaited on the other side, but who awaited him. It was his master, his Lord, his Saviour and His God. This is another reason, we can trust the Scriptures, because it was written by faithful men, who were not only willing to die, but actually did die for Christ.

Friends, how about you? Do you have an unshakable confidence in the Scriptures? Do you believe every word of the Bible? Then, search the Scriptures, read the Scriptures. Trust the Scriptures. In them are found the Words of life.

Let's pray.