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Grace Bible Institute - Bibliology
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Last Words to Live By
2 Peter 1:12-21

Tonight we want to consider why the Bible is not just a book to read - these are words to live by. What you believe about the Bible determines what you do with the Bible. Wrong views of Scripture are destructive. Right views of Scripture give life and health to our souls.

Turn in your Bible to Peter's last letter - 2 Peter 1:12-21.

Notice Peter's passion to make sure the church builds their Christian lives on what is reliable:

2 Peter 1:12-21

- 12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth which is present with *you*.
- 13 I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder,
- 14 knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.
- 15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.
- 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.
- 17 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"—
- 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.
- 19 So we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

- 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation,
- 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

If you remember last week, I began our first class in the Grace Bible Institute with some made up people who may have had some different thoughts about a three year class on theology. **One of the made up characters was called Practical Prascilla.** Her concern was the practicality of Scripture for everyday life. She is the picture of someone who has a hard time connecting doctrine and devotion, belief and behavior, in every day life. Maybe her motto in life is that Christians are too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good.

I've had the privilege of teaching classes here on Wednesday nights for the last six years. One thing I know is that classes usually start out with some measure of excitement and then over time for whatever reason, maybe its my fault, the excitement fades and the attendance starts going down. In order to keep some of you around for the next three years I feel some pressure to help you make this connection - that it is worth your time to walk through a three year study of theology. I have to show you that right thinking and right living go together like Jalapeño chips and sweet tea. I understand that connection though some of you may struggle with it. I love that connection. Getting theology right does make a difference in how we live.

My first mentor used to tell me, "Blake, doctrine received, believed and practiced determines your character (who you are), your behavior (how you act) and your destiny (where you spend eternity)." The first book he gave me to read was this book by Martyn Lloyd Jones called "The Cross" which is 9 sermons Dr. Lloyd Jones preached on one verse in the New Testament. It showed me how the one death Jesus died has many different implications for how I live as a Christian.

In 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul tells Timothy, "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, **constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.**" I love that connection. Believers in Christ are continually nourished on the words

of the faith and of the sound doctrine. Please listen - If you want a healthy soul studying and applying sound doctrine is not an option.

God uses sound doctrine to satisfy our souls

This is a trip worth taking. These are hours worth spending together. We're beginning the Grace Bible Institute with Bibliology because we have to understand what the Scripture says about the Scripture in order to submit our lives to the Scripture. Tonight we are going to be reminded that God uses His Word to accomplish His saving purposes in our lives. Believers should have a high view of Scripture because Scripture is the tool the Spirit uses the cause us to be born again.

Unbelievers have a negative view of the Bible for many reasons. Mark Twain is an example. Here is what Mark Twain said about Scripture:

"It is full of interest. It has noble poetry in it; and some clever fables; and some blood drenched history; and some good morals ; and a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies."

Another unbeliever named Ian McKellan says, "I've often thought the Bible should have a disclaimer in the front saying this is fiction."

The Bible has always has its fair share of defenders and detractors

In 2 Peter, we find Peter defending the Bible against detractors. 1 Peter was written to help the church stand firm against persecution outside the walls of the church. **2 Peter was written to help the church to stand firm against false teachers inside the walls of the church.** This has always been a challenge for the church. To stand firm in the faith against people inside the church who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction.

In 2 Peter 1:12-21 Peter makes it clear that he is fading off the scene. He knows he is about to die. His goal is for Christians is to leave something reliable behind once he is gone. Peter loved Christ and Peter loved people who belonged to Christ. He knew the best defense against false teaching is to give people the

tuth so we can be established in the truth. Peter was modeling that as he is about to die for his faith in Jesus Christ. The truths he preached were the truths that would get him through martyrdom and safely into the presence of Christ.

In 2 Peter 1:12-21 we see Peter telling the church to do 2 things as it relates to Scripture:

1. Remember the Truth - 2 Peter 1:12-15

Notice the first word in verse 12 is the word therefore. "Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*." When you see the word therefore you need to go back and read what has just been written. Peter begins his last letter with a reminder of salvation. Verses 1-11 take us on a tour from salvation in eternity past, to the present and into the future. **In order to be established in the truth we need to continually spend time marinating our souls in the truths of the gospel.** How God saved us and what to pursue as His people and what we have to look forward to in the future. All of that is laid out in the first 11 verses.

Before Peter calls out the false teachers in chapter 2, he begins with the truth. The better you know the truth the better you will be able to detect error. If you and I want to protect ourselves against false teaching we have to spend time understanding the true grace of God and what our lives should look like if we have received it. That's where Peter begins. He connects grace and godliness because if your understanding of grace does not lead to godliness then your understanding of grace is unbiblical (see also Titus 2:11-15).

Here's something basic - if we get salvation wrong it doesn't matter what we get right. Peter starts with overview of the plan of salvation, how we make progress once we are saved and the ultimate purpose of our salvation. This jet tour from eternity past to eternity future lays the groundwork for everything else in this letter.

Here's the thing I want you to see - These people already knew this. They knew that grace results in godliness. Going back over reminders of salvation is what the Spirit uses to establish us in salvation. Verse 13 shows us how Peter knows he is about to die. Jesus made it clear to Peter back in John 21 that he would ultimately die as a martyr for the faith. The time has come. Peter is moving on up to glory. But before he goes he wants to make sure these believers get salvation right and what our lives should look like if we have the real thing.

If you're a new believer I would strongly encourage you to use the first 11 verses as a road map for the Christian life. They show you how God saved you. They show you what to pursue as His child. They show you that living for Christ is worth it because of what you have to look forward to. Peter's moving on up to heaven and he wants to make sure he's not the only one. He loves Christ and He loves the church and he wants them to stay on the straight and narrow path that leads to glory. What more loving thing can Peter do.

Can I ask you something - Do people you love know the gospel the right way? Can you say you really love someone if you never take the time to make sure they understand the message of salvation? I really don't think I can say I love someone if I am not willing to open the Bible and open my mouth and explain who God is, who we are and why we need Christ and what Christ has done for our salvation. Peter calls the church believed and he backs up his love with a final clear presentation of the gospel of grace and what it leads to.

The first thing Peter says to the church before he leaves is to remember the truth. The second thing Peter tells them in 2 Peter 1:16-21 is to:

2. Remain in the Truth - 2 Peter 1:16-21

2 Peter 1:16-21

- 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.

- 17 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” —
- 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.
- 19 So we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.
- 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation,
- 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Who is Peter addressing in verse 16? I think Peter is addressing the false teachers that he writes about in chapter 2. In chapter 2 Peter paints a vivid picture of the problem of false teachers. In chapter 3 we learn how false teachers mocked the teaching that Christ was coming back a second time to judge the living and the dead. False teachers denied the return of Christ in power and in glory to rescue the church and to judge the world.

Who would this church trust? When Peter was gone would they buy what the false teachers were selling or would they stick with the truth? **The false teachers attacked Peter on the grounds that what he said about the second coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead was a cleverly devised tale.** The second coming of Christ in glory to judge the earth was nothing more than a myth. A figment of Peter's vain imagination. He made it up.

The church was coming under the attack of false teachers who claimed that what Peter taught about Christ was something he made up. How does Peter handle this? How does he build confidence in the church that once he leaves God's Word can really be trusted?

Peter uses two arguments in verses 16-21 to build confidence in the church to remain in the truth until the return of Christ:

- a. The Testimony of Peter - 2 Peter 1:16-18

Peter uses his own eyewitness account of what he saw and what he heard on the Mt. of Transfiguration to bolster confidence in the people of God in the Word of God:

2 Peter 1:16-18

- 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.
- 17** 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"—
- 18** and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

What did Peter, James and John see on the Mt of Transfiguration? They saw a preview of coming attractions. Peter James and John saw the fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecy. **They saw in the transfiguration of Christ a positive pledge and a foretaste of the reign in glory of their incarnate Lord.**

What is Peter doing here? Peter is building confidence in the Word of God based on what he saw and what he heard. He had a unique front row seat to the glory of Christ and to the testimony of God the father about Christ. You can read a more detailed account of this in Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9.

Some commentators think Peter has in mind Psalm 2. Psalm 2 is a Messianic Psalm where David writes about the relationship between God the Father and the Messiah. **If you go back and read Psalm 2 you see this relationship and you see how what people do with Christ, the Messiah, matters.** Psalm 2 ends with verses 11-12, "**11** Worship the Lord with reverence And rejoice with trembling. **12** Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him." Psalm 2 reminds us that Christ is precious to God the Father and what people do with Christ matters for time and for eternity.

Peter saw the glory of Christ and heard the voice of God testifying to His unique love for His Son. Peter was there. He's not making this up. This is not a cleverly devised myth. What the Old Testament predicted had come to pass and Peter

had a unique front row seat. Peter was chosen by Christ to have a unique personal encounter with the glorified Savior. A glimpse into what's to come. A preview of coming attractions.

So, Peter's experience on the Mount of Transfiguration confirms what the Old Testament teaches about Christ. This should bolster the confidence of Christians in the Word of God. The apostles were all eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. Some saw His glory before the cross. All of them saw His glory after the cross. That's what set them apart as Apostles. Before Jesus sent them out He proved that He was who He claimed to be. He put the cookies on the bottom shelf so they would build their lives and ministries on the assurance that serving the resurrected Christ is not in vain.

But notice where Peter turns in verses 19-21 - He doesn't stop with his own personal eyewitness account of the glory of Christ and the voice of God.

He wants to leave them something even better. This is really really important. Remember Peter knows he is about to die. He is leaving and he wants to leave believers with something reliable because they're coming under the attack of false teachers. What happens to Peter's eyewitness testimony when Peter dies? When Peter dies his eyewitness testimony dies with him. So, in verses 19-21 he provides them with something more sure, more reliable:

b. The Truth of God's Word

2 Peter 1:19-21

- 19** So we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.
- 20** But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation,
- 21** for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Here Peter turns from his own personal experience to the prophetic word itself.
From what he saw and heard on the Mt. of Transfiguration to what the

Scripture says. In verses 19-21 Peter provides two compelling reasons to stick with Scripture once he leaves:

a. The Character of the Prophetic Word - 2 Peter 1:19

2 Peter 1:19, "So we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

We here includes all believers. Not just those who were with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration. We have describes the abiding possession of the Word of prophecy. The Old Testament as a whole. Prophetic describes the word. Prophecy includes a predictive element. Remember Jesus told the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27 and Luke 24:44 that every part of the Old Testament contains prophecies about the coming Messiah. They all bear witness to the coming of Christ and what would take place.

Made more sure describes the prophetic word. It describes the Old Testament Messianic promises as being more sure, firm, reliable. We've already discussed how the transfiguration confirmed Old Testament prophecy. This is what I have spent the whole evening preparing you for. So please fasten your seat belt.

The description of the prophetic word being more sure begs the question - more sure than what? The first word in greek in verse 19 is kai which is often translated and.

D. Edmond Heibert, "In view of the coordinating "and," it seems more natural to render, "And we have (as) more sure the prophetic word. Then the meaning is that we have another source of assurance that is even more reliable than the testimony of the Apostle's, namely, the prophetic word. It is a fuller and more explicit testimony of the Messianic Glory."

You've probably heard me say this before - The Word of God when accompanied by the Spirit of God does the work of God. That's what we see at the end of verse 19. The function of Old Testament Prophecy. The Scriptures have practical value for our everyday life. We live in a dark world of human depravity.

The Scripture is the light that points us to the Light of the World, Jesus Christ. The light is the lamp of revelation. The word of God.

We are now in the period of waiting. Waiting for the return of Christ. When Christ returns we won't need the written Word because we will have the Living Word. The day will dawn and the morning star will arise in our hearts. "Jesus' second coming will not only be an objective event in history, it will also rise **in your hearts** as the full light of Christ's presence transforms the hearts of his church to perfect purity." This should give us hope.

b. **The Confidence of the Prophetic Word** - 2 Peter 1:20-21

The reason believers must maintain confidence in the prophetic word, the reason it is more sure is because of where it comes from. 2 Peter 1:20-21 are super important verses about the reliability of the Bible. These two verses show us where God's word did not originate and where it did originate:

Where did Scripture not originate? 2 Peter 1:20, "But **know** this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a *matter* of one's own interpretation." Peter is writing about how Scripture came into being. This describes the origin of the prophetic word and relates to the prophet himself. No prophecy of Scripture came about by the Prophet's own interpretation. Peter's point is not so much about how to interpret Scripture, but rather how Scripture originated.

Verse 21 makes this crystal clear, "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Scripture that saves and prepares us for glory is not the result of human origin or human will. The Bible is not the product of human effort. Peter reminds us that men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

That doesn't mean the prophets were puppets. They weren't. It does mean the Holy Spirit is the agent in the work of prophecy. Borne along is a picture of a ship at sea being carried along by the wind.

D. Edmond Heibert, "The Prophets, while recipients of the Spirit's moving power, were not like mere inanimate ships. The prophets raised their sails so to speak

(they were obedient and receptive) and the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft along in the direction he wished. They remained conscious and in control of their rational powers, but they were not in any way the manipulator of divine powers."

This is the only mention of the Holy Spirit in Peter's last letter. This is what should give you and I ultimate confidence to continue in the Scripture - Both the Old and the New Testament - until the return of our Savior.

In essence, Peter argues that all the writers of Scripture were ferried along by the Holy Spirit and arrived at the same destination. One has to imagine these writers as cars aboard a ferry. Each one got on the ferry—each one appeared to be doing his own thing—each one delivered his own distinctive word. But at the same time the owner of the ferry—in this case, God—made sure they all landed together at his port of call because he carried them to their destination on the ballast and strength of his Spirit.

Where does Peter place authority in the church? Does Peter place authority in apostolic succession as the Catholic Church teaches? No. **Peter gives “unhindered authority” only to the living and written Word of God.** Submitting yourself, therefore, to the full teaching of the Bible is what it means to follow in the apostolic way.

I'll close with another Heibert quote because it really presses home how practical this is - "This passage is one of the most important in the Bible for understanding the doctrine of scripture, in respect both to the nature of its inspiration and to the doctrine of the entire trustworthiness or infallibility there of."

Where does our ultimate confidence in the Word of God come from? It comes from understanding that God's Word did not originate in man. It originated in the Spirit of God who carried men along so that what they wrote is God's Holy Word and it is all we need to get from here to the glory of Christ.