

Scripture—"More Sure" Than Anything Else

Dear Friends,

A thorough study of Scripture uncovers multiple reminders of God's originally influencing the writers of Scripture to write His will and words, not theirs, but we also uncover equally repeated and strong reminders in Scripture that the God who first directed the writing of those words faithfully involves His keeping, preserving power over those words so that believers today have the same faithful witness to God and His words and will that the original readers had. Folks who need to discredit either the divine giving or the divine preservation of Scripture to teach their wrested ideas (2 Peter 3:16 KJV) will tell you that the sixty six books of the Bible that we regard as Scripture, as inspired and preserved by the Lord for His people in all ages, are honored only because a church council some three hundred years after Jesus and the apostles lived approved these books, but, supposedly, according to them, there are many other ancient writings--and, of course, not so ancient--that are just as truthful and reliable as these books. They ignore--and contradict--the internal testimony of Scripture itself that these writings were directed and preserved by God, not by a church council. From the first generation of apostles and believers, the followers of Jesus held these sixty six books in such high regard because they believed the writings bore internal witness to a supernatural origin and content, not because a later church gathering approved them. I am persuaded; if contemporary Christians worked as hard to believe both the divine inspiration and the divine preservation of Scripture--and with that belief, the actual literal words of those writings, the Christian community of our time would be far more like those first believers than the living contradiction to those ancient people that they are.

Regardless what others think or say about Scripture, God help us to hold it in high regard, to believe it, and to order our lives by it, instead of constantly trying to rewrite it or ignore it.

God bless,
Joe Holder

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Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:15-21 KJV 1900)

What do you regard as most reliable, first-hand testimony or a written document? Most of us would lean toward first-hand testimony. However, Peter in this passage tells his readers, including us, that both his eyewitness testimony and his writings are true, but his writings should be regarded even more highly

than his personal experience and his testimony of it. The point is not that his personal experience was flawed, but that his writings, this particular writing, had a more powerful authority behind it than even his own personal experience. We sometimes wonder; did the writers of Scripture have any sense that their writings were being directed by the Spirit of God? And Peter's words in this lesson affirm that he did understand that his writings were directed by the Spirit and were intended to endure far longer than his personal life and eyewitness testimony. Paul referred to Luke's gospel as "Scripture," (1 Timothy 5:18 KJV) the same as Moses' writings in the first five books of the Old Testament. Luke claimed his authority for writing the gospel record under his name as "**from the very first,**" more than from interviews with eyewitnesses. "...*having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first.*" (Luke 1:3 KJV) "from the very first" was translated from the same Greek word as Jesus' words to Nicodemus, "*Ye must be born again.*" (John 3:3, 7 KJV) This word can refer to time, or it can also refer to source or authority, literally, "from above." In simple logic, the same source Jesus identified for the new birth Luke cited as his knowledge and authority to write the gospel which follows those words. He quite likely did talk with Mary and many of the eye-witness disciples. However, he claimed the "Above" source as his authority for what he wrote.

Peter wrote his epistle with his own mortality in view, but he also wrote with a passion for his readers to have a simple and informative source and authority for their faith that would endure long after his death. The Mount of Transfiguration experience was a "Beyond this life" experience for the three men whom Jesus took with Him. Peter could bear detailed and credible testimony to what happened on that mountain. But how long would belief of that event survive after his death? Believers in subsequent generations needed something more enduring, a written message that would bear its internal evidence of being just as supernatural in its origin as that mountain experience. In fact, Peter refers to the witness of faith the Lord gives to His family in Scripture as a "...*a more sure word of prophecy.*" What he wrote to those believers "...*of like precious faith*" was "more sure" than even his own eyewitness testimony from the mountain.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy. "**Also,**" Peter doesn't dismiss that heavenly experience, but he reminds his readers, and us, that what we have in the inspired written word of Scripture is "**more sure**" than even that experience. It is more enduring. In Peter's mind, every detail of that heavenly experience was burned into his memory. He could recall the experience with a burning conviction of its reality and meaning. As soon as Peter died, and he expected it to be soon when he wrote, that event would become a secondhand report from those who heard him tell it. He wanted his readers to anchor their faith onto something more steadfast and enduring, so he wrote as directed by the Holy Spirit. What he wrote he understood to be directed by the Spirit, the same as the Old Testament writings. I love the word picture in verses 20-21. What Old Testament writers wrote, according to Peter, was not their private ideas or interpretations. They wrote as they were "**moved by the Holy Ghost.**" In this phrase, "moved" was translated from a first century nautical term. It referred to a sailing ship being "Carried across the waters by the wind." Imagine an ancient sailing ship loaded with precious cargo. It leaves its home port for a destination port far away. The crew raise the sails, and the winds "Carry the ship along" to its destination. Peter used this idea to teach us how the Holy Spirit carried the writers of Scripture along on His "wind," His "breath." (The meaning of the word translated "*inspiration*" in 2 Timothy 3:16)

...whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. Today, no less than with Peter's original audience, believers who share Peter's "**like precious faith**" do well to study, believe, and order their lives by the written word of Scripture. We each need to linger long hours with these words. Consider the blessings of such a study in godly faith.

1. *...as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.* Weigh any world view, any philosophy of life, or any religion other than Christianity for that matter. Scripture (Not human perversions of it) shines its dazzling light of the gracious God and His wise, righteous, and good character above them all. For example, what would be the state of our world if people simply practiced Jesus' "Golden Rule"? (Matthew 7:12 KJV) And do not overlook Jesus' words at the end of this verse. "**...for this is the law and the prophets.**" How many perverted minds have cited Moses' Law and twisted it to support their private rigid and often misguided ideas? Jesus gave us the supreme test of any idea that cites Moses and the law. If it doesn't teach you to treat others as you would have them treat you, it is a perversion of God's law to Moses. Reject it. Study the four Gospels in the New Testament, concentrating on the lifestyle that Jesus lived. He is our ultimate example. His followers are commanded to live their lives in His example. Can you see that "*...light that shineth in a dark place*"?

2. *...until the day dawn.* We'd like to think of living in a world where only godly Biblical values prevail. In this world, that shall never be. How long has this world stood? Not once in the history of humanity has such an idyllic culture existed, so why think it will happen now? However, Peter's teaching to "*...them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,*" (2 Peter 1:1 KJV) exhorts them (**Us**) to invest our whole being in seeking to live by that faith, a faith that looks for its guiding light to the "*...righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" alone. And a lifestyle that Peter directs us to work to make fruitful. (2 Peter 1:5-9 KJV) Yes, a believer may so neglect or stifle his faith as to actually forget "*...that he was purged from his old sins.*" But Peter teaches us how to avoid such a disgraceful lifestyle.

3. *...and the day star arise in your hearts.* What Peter describes in these words is not a brief emotional hype. It is a settled and reliable light that shines as a constant "Guiding star" in our lives. We experience this glorious state only when we live the lifestyle of Jesus in the trenches of life, in our fiercest trials, in our darkest and most discouraging moments, as well as in our most joyful days. This "day star" is not a shooting star that flashes across the sky of our life and quickly vanishes over the horizon. It is a settled star that arises in the seat of our deepest and most enduring motives and commitments.

All these blessings Peter attributes to the prevalence of that "*more sure word of prophecy,*" the inspired writings that we call our New Testament. Immediately he related it to his own 2 Peter writings. We can't experience these blessings by an occasional and casual reading of our favorite passages. They result only from a habitual and settled familiarization of our minds with the writings of Scripture.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. Read this sentence carefully. While it is wholly true that we should not subject Scripture to our personal opinions and ideas; godly faith rather **submits** our selves to Scripture and its teachings, to its holistic lifestyle. The focus of Peter's teaching, as well as the basic flow of this sentence reminds us that the men who wrote the Old Testament Scriptures (And by extension, the New Testament Scriptures as they unfolded), did not write what we read from their pens as personal opinions or philosophy. It was not their "private interpretation" of life, of God, of what was moral and what was immoral, indeed, a complete lifestyle and faith-relationship with God. It was what God led them to write from His heart to His people.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Why is Scripture so reliable? Peter explains. As indicated above, Peter taught that the Holy Spirit "breathed" His influence onto the men He chose to write the Scriptures, so that the

words they wrote were not their personal ideas or philosophy, but what the Holy Spirit directed them to write.

We live after Peter's "decease," right? Faithful and wise believers should hold firmly to this lesson. The same "Wind" that carried the original writers along to write what He wanted them to write continues to "Breathe" on those words to preserve them for His people. We have that same "More sure" than anything else Word. Love it, respect it, believe it, and live it!

Elder Joe Holder