

# Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

## An Expository Journey Through **2Peter** 7- Men Moved by the Holy Spirit Spoke from God

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June 28, 2020

### **2Peter 1:20&21**

**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.

To the Glory of God

On June 27, 1819, Adoniram Judson baptized his first convert in Burma. And, in her diary, Judson's wife, Ann Hasseltine, described how Moug Nau had responded to the Scripture:

"A few days ago, I was reading with him (Nau), Christ's Sermon on the Mount. He was deeply impressed and unusually solemn. *'These words,'* said he, *'take hold on my liver; they make me tremble.'*"

.. and that is the correct response. Because God Himself spoke through Isaiah the Prophet 2,700 years ago and said,

### **Isaiah 66:2b**

**... But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.**

O that God would raise up an army of men in this day, who would tremble at God's Word! How so many things would change! Now I rejoice that God was pleased to make the Word of God plain to us in the English

language. And I honor men like John Wycliffe, who, 635 years ago, was martyred for giving us this precious, sacred Writ in the language that we all speak and can understand. But I am sore afraid, this morning, my dear friends, that we have all grown so comfortable with God and His Word that the inspired, infallible and inerrant Words of the Owner and Creator of the Universe no longer “takes hold of our liver”- and so, we no longer tremble. May God be Good to visit us again; and change us again- so that we may once again tremble at His Words.

For over 2,000 years, the Bible has been taking hold of people's livers and making them tremble- first with great Fear- because it reveals our Sin; but then with great Faith- because it reveals God's Grace. And nowhere is this Truth illustrated any better than in the testimony of a very wicked man, who lived for many years in great debauchery and sin, who said,

“I kept seeking for an answer to the question: Where does Evil come from? And I sought it in an evil way, and I did not see the Evil in my very search.”

This question plagued him, until he realized that all things are Good, even if they are corrupted.

“They could not be corrupted if they were supremely Good,”

... he said, referring to the supreme Goodness of God.

“But unless they were already Good they could not be corrupted,”

... he added, referring to Man. That led him to his final Conclusion about Evil. Evil does not exist as a Substance, but as a *perversion* of the human Will- bent *away* from God. He reached a similar Conclusion with the idea of Falsehood- it being...

“nothing except the existence in thought of what does not exist in fact.”

Now that he had solved the “Problem of Evil”, the still lost Augustine had come closer than ever to trusting in the Christ of the Christian Faith. But he had not yet “settled down” to *enjoy* God.

“I had now found the priceless pearl,”

he says,

“and I ought to have sold all that I had and bought it – yet I hesitated.”

It was during this time, after he has realized the Source of Evil, that God the Holy Spirit revealed to Augustine his *own* Wickedness.

“And now You set me face to face with myself, that I might see how ugly I was, and how crooked and sordid, bespotted and ulcerous. And I looked and I loathed myself.”

This change in Augustine’s esteem of himself led him directly to the Sin he knew he had to repent of; and turn from- in order to become a Christian: his own rampant Immorality.

Caught in this great battle- Augustine headed out into the courtyard with his friend Alypius. And with his heart raging and filled with fear and anxiety- this man experienced his watershed moment with God – an Event so powerful that even Alypius did not dare speak to Augustine, opting instead to leave him alone in the agony of his soul...

“I neither willed with my whole will, nor was I wholly unwilling,”

...explained Augustine about his deep struggle. His torment and “soul sickness” reached its climax, when suddenly, Augustine threw himself on the ground and gave way to the tears that had been flooding his heart. And he cried out to God in despair- asking, like the psalmist,

**“How long, O Lord?”**

“I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when suddenly I heard the voice of a boy or a girl (I know not which) – coming from the neighboring house, chanting over and over again. ‘Pick it up, read it; pick it up, read it.’”

Augustine then opened up a copy of the Scriptures and saw a single verse, **Romans 13:13**- a Passage that spoke directly to the Sin that he could not seem to escape from.

“I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to. For instantly, as the sentence ended, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away,”

Later, perhaps Christianity’s greatest mind confessed to God,

“You had pierced my heart with Your Love through Your Word”

For Martin Luther, who had become a very a miserable monk, the Light broke into his soul through **Romans 1:1**, and he said,

“Night and day, I pondered until I saw the connection between the Justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the Justice of God is that Righteousness by which through Grace and sheer Mercy God justifies us through Faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”

And for America’s greatest Theologian, Jonathan Edwards, it was **1Timothy 1:17**. And he said,

“The first instance, that I remember, of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading these words, ‘**Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.**’ As I read the words, there came into my soul . . . a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense quite different from anything I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did.”

... so, from century to century; from Egypt; to Germany; to New England- the Bible has been drawing people to Christ and making them new.

But how? How has the Bible had this abiding Relevance and Power on millions of people, throughout the world for almost 3,000 years? The Answer is found in the Passage that Brother Vern just read to us:

**2Peter 1:20&21**

**But know this first of all, that 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 Passage teaches that when you read Scripture, what you are reading does not merely come from a man but also from God. The Bible is the writing of many different men. But it is also far more than that. Yes, men spoke. And, yes, they spoke in their own language; and style. But Peter mentions two other dimensions of their speaking.

- They spoke from God
- They were “moved” by the Holy Spirit

*First*, these men “spoke *from God*.” So, what they have to say is NOT merely from their own limited perspective. They are not the *Origin* of the Truth they speak- they are merely the “Means”. The Truth that they spoke- is *God's Truth*. And the *meaning* of their words- is God's meaning.

*Second*, not only is *what* they spoke from God, but *how* they spoke it is controlled by the Holy Spirit. “Men, *moved by the Holy Spirit*, spoke from God.” God did not simply reveal Truth to the writers of Scripture and then depart in the Hope that they might communicate it accurately. No, the Apostle Peter says here that in the very communicating of that Divine Truth- they were “carried” by the Holy Spirit. And that means that the making of the Bible was not left to the skill of communication that some men might have. No, God the Holy Spirit Himself carried the process to completion.

Recently, three Seminary professors published a book, entitled, “*Old Testament Survey*.” And on page 15, they said,

“To assure verbal precision God, in communicating his revelation, must be verbally precise, and inspiration must extend to the very words. This does not mean that God dictated every word. Rather his Spirit so pervaded the mind of the human writer that he chose out of his own vocabulary and experience precisely those words, thoughts and expressions that conveyed God's message with precision. In this sense the words of the human authors of Scripture can be viewed as the word of God.”

Now some have argued that **2Peter 1:20&21** only deals with Prophecy and not with *all* Old Testament Scripture. But look carefully how the Apostle writes. In verse 19, Peter says that the “**prophetic word**” has been made “**more sure**” to him by his own personal Experience with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. And then, in verses 20&21 he undergirds the Authority of this “prophetic word” by saying it is part of Scripture.

## **2Peter 1:20**

**But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a *matter* of one's own interpretation,**

... so, Peter is NOT saying that only the *prophetic* parts of Scripture are inspired by God. No, the Apostle is teaching, "*We know the prophetic word is inspired precisely because it is a "prophecy of Scripture."* So, Peter's Assumption is that *whatever* stands in Scripture- is from God- and written by men- who were "moved" or "carried along" by God the Holy Spirit.

And Peter's Teaching is the very same as Paul's in **2Timothy 3:16&17:**

**All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

... so, *none* of the Old Testament Scriptures came by the impulse of man. All of it is Truth from God as men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.

Okay, but what about the New Testament? Did the Apostles and their close associates (John Mark, Dr. Luke, James, Jude, and the writer to the **Hebrews**) experience Divine Inspiration as they wrote? Were they also "moved" or "carried along" by God the Holy Spirit to speak from God as much as the Old Testament writers?

Well, the Christian Church has always answered, "Yes!" And the *reason* they answered that way was because Jesus said this to His Apostles in **John 16:12&13:**

**I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.**

Now I realize that many Christians today take this Passage to apply to *all* genuine believers. But the *context* of the entire Chapter simply won't allow that. Jesus spoke this directly to His Apostles. And so, it is taking this completely out of context to assume it is for all believers.

So, here is the logic. Jesus called God the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of

Truth". And Jesus promised that this Spirit of Truth will "guide"; or "lead"; or "direct"; or "show"; or "reveal"; or "disclose" to the Apostles, "all Truth" or "final Truth" or "finished Truth" or "complete Truth". And then Jesus promised:

**... for He [the Spirit of Truth] will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.**

... and that is *exactly* what happened as the New Testament writers were also "moved" or "carried along" by God the Holy Spirit to pen down the 27 Books of the New Testament- which is the *final, full, and completed* Revelation of God to Man.

And because the "Spirit of Truth" is the One, Who is guiding them- what they wrote down is *just as* infallible; and *just as* inerrant; and *just as* inspired as the 39 Books of the Old Testament.

But then the Apostle Paul confirms this when he says of his own Apostolic Teaching in **1Corinthians 2:12&13**:

**Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.**

... then in **2Corinthians 13:3**, Paul made the fantastic claim that Jesus Christ Himself speaks,

**"in me"**

... and then, in **Galatians 1:11&12**, he said,

**For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.**

... so, if we take Paul as our model for what it meant to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, then it would be fair to say that the New Testament as well as the Old is not merely from *Man* but also from *God*. The writers of the Old Testament *and* New Testament both spoke as they were "moved" by the Holy Spirit.

So, the Doctrine that emerges from this is:

*The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author of all Scripture*

... or the “Doctrine of Inspiration”.

And since this Doctrine is true, the Implications are so profound and far-reaching that every part of our lives should be affected by it. And I want to talk about those Implications this morning. But for our own strengthening and for those still wavering on the outskirts of commitment- let me first sketch out the *Basis* of our persuasion.

Most people come to a reasonable Trust in the Bible as God's Word something like this. It usually happens in three stages.

## **1. We Are Guilty Before God**

First, three things:

- The Testimony of our own Conscience
- The Reality of the God behind Creation
- The Message of Scripture

... all come together in our minds and hearts to bring us into the *inescapable* Conviction that we are absolutely Guilty before our Creator. And this is a *reasonable* Conviction- because the Persuasion that there is a Creator above this world; the Persuasion that we are guilty for not honoring and loving this Creator as we ought; and the *inescapable* Reality that Evil exists- are NOT irrational leaps in the dark. They are *forced* upon us by our own personal Experiences; and by our honest thinking about Life and this world.

## **2. Jesus Wins Our Confidence**

The second Step on the way to a reasonable Persuasion that the Bible is God's Word is that Jesus Christ is shown to us. So, we read or hear the Account of this incomparable Man- Who talked; and acted like so much more than a mere man. We see the Authority he had to forgive Sin; command demons; organically heal bodies; and to control Creation. We see the absolute Purity of His Teaching; His utter Surrender to the Will of



God; His brilliant Calm under brutal and violent cross-examination; His righteous Fury against religious hypocrites; His Tenderness toward little children; His Patience with the humble seekers; His innocent Submission to the most brutal kinds of torture; and we hear from His Lips the sweetest, most comforting; most encouraging; most-needed Words ever spoken- such as:

**Matthew 20:28b**

**... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**

And so, as much by His Beauty and Kindness as by His Power and Authority- we are taken aback by Jesus. And by the Self-authenticating Force of His Own incomparable Character and Power- Jesus wins our Confidence and our Trust; and we begin to believe that truly there is no one like Jesus. And so, we believe. And we *embrace* Jesus as the Savior from our Sin; the Lord of our life; and the Treasure of Heaven. And this is also NOT an irrational Persuasion. It's the way all of us go about making reasonable Decisions about whom we will trust in life.

For example, will you trust *this* babysitter with your children; or *this* lawyer to give you good counsel; or *this* surgeon to open up your body to remove the cancer; or *this* friend to keep your secret? You look; and you listen; and you think; and, eventually, you are persuaded (or not) that here, in this person, is solid ground for your Confidence. And that's what we do with Jesus.

### **3. We Follow the Teaching and Spirit of Jesus**

Once the Character and Power of Jesus have captured our Trust, then He becomes the Guide and Authority for all our *future* Decisions and Persuasions. So, the third Step on the way to a reasonable Persuasion that the Bible is God's Word- is to let the Teaching and the Spirit of Jesus control how we assess the Bible. And this happens in at least two different ways.

First, we "believe" what Jesus Himself taught about both the Old and New Testaments. For example, when Jesus said that "**the Scripture cannot be broken**" (John 10:35); and that "**not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law till all is accomplished**" (Matthew 5:18), we agree with Him. So, we base our Confidence in the Old Testament on His Reliability. And

when Jesus chose twelve sinners (Apostles) to establish His Church; gives them His Own Authority to Teach and Perform Miracles; and then promises to send His Spirit to guide them into all Truth- we agree with Jesus. And we then credit the Writings of *these* men with the very Authority and Trustworthiness of Jesus Himself.

The other way the Teaching and Spirit of Jesus control our Assessment of the Bible- is that we recognize, in the Teachings of the Bible, the many-colored Rays of Light refracted out from the Prism of this God/Man, Whom we have come to trust. And just as Jesus enabled us to make sense out of our own Relationship to God and bring Harmony to it, so also the many Rays of His Truth, in every part of the Bible, enable us to make sense out of hundreds of our *own* Experiences in this life- and we see the way to Harmony.

So, our Confidence in Scripture grows as we realize that Jesus Himself affirmed it; and as we realize that its Teachings are as *incomparable* as Jesus Himself. Time after time, the sacred Writings help us make sense out of Life's puzzles like: troubled Marriages; rebellious children; financial problems; Suffering; War; the return of the leaves every Spring; the insatiable Longings of our own hearts; Death and the fear of Death; bringing children into this world; the universality of both Praise and Blame; the prevalence of Pride in our own hearts; along with the admiration of Self-denial. The Bible confirms its Divine Origin again and again as it makes sense out of our own Experiences in the real world and points the way to perfect Harmony.

I hope, therefore, that one of the Doctrines which we cherish at the Covenant of Peace Church- enough to die for it (and to be eager to live for it!) is that *the Holy Spirit is the Divine Author of all Scripture*. The Bible is God's Word- not merely Man's word.

But sadly, this position sets us apart from other, larger Protestant Denominations, which have chosen to take a path away from trusting in the Veracity and Reliability of Scripture. And so, they make Statements about Scripture like:

“The Bible is NOT the ‘Word of God’- it is a ‘Word ABOUT God’”

And the implication of a Statement like this is: that these Denominations, which all have their roots in the Protestant Reformation; and which all *verbally* agree with Confessions and Catechisms which *contradict*

their present positions, is that the Bible is really a collection of stories- like Aesop's fables- that Science has proven to be untrue- and which are there to basically give us a "moral direction". But, to those who hold this position- the Scriptures are certainly NOT Inerrant and Infallible (and thus are NOT Inspired) and thus must be read with a jaundice eye.

But this position also sets us apart from many, within the Pentecostal; Charismatic; and Full-Gospel Movement, who teach that God the Holy Spirit moves upon people today with certain giftings which enable them to receive and utter a "Word from God".

And the implication of Teachings like *that*- is that God is continuing to add to the Scriptures every day- as more and more Divine Revelation is continuing to be received by Man.

You see, the Problem with making Statements like that- is that there are NO "degrees" to Inspiration. Either God spoke or He didn't. And if God spoke- *whatever* He said- is Infallible; Inerrant; Authoritative; and Sufficient, etc. In other words, *whatever* Revelation God speaks- is "Scripture". There is no such thing as something God spoke being "*somewhat* Inspired"; or "*sort of* Infallible"; or "*partially* Inerrant"; or *pretty much* Sufficient. A "Word from God" is a "Word from God"- in every respect.

O, that we had all day to talk about the wonderful implications of this Doctrine! *The Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture!* Therefore:

- Scripture is True (**Psalm 119:142**)
- Scripture is altogether reliable (**Hebrews 6:18**)
- Scripture is Powerful, working its purpose in our hearts (**1Thessalonians 2:13**)
- Scripture does not return empty to the One Who sent it (**Isaiah 55:10& 11**)
- Scripture is pure, like silver refined in a furnace seven times (**Psalm 12:6**)
- Scripture is sanctifying (**John 17:17**)
- Scripture gives life (**Psalm 119:37; 50; 93; 107; John 6:63; Matthew 4:4**)
- Scripture makes wise (**Psalm 19:7; 119:99&100**)
- Scripture gives joy (**Psalm 19:8; 119:16; 92; 111; 143; 174**)
- Scripture promises great reward (**Psalm 19:11**)
- Scripture gives strength to the weak (**Psalm 119:28**)

- Scripture gives comfort to the distraught (**Psalm 119:76**)
- Scripture gives guidance to the perplexed (**Psalm 119:105**)
- Scripture brings Salvation to the lost (**Psalm 119:155; 2Timothy 3:15**)

Now we can sum up what we have seen so far in **2Peter 1** with three pictures:

- A great and attractive Reward (**2Peter 1:1-4**)
- A Man swimming against an ocean current (**2Peter 1:5-11**)
- A Lamp shining in the night (**2Peter 1:12-19**)

### **2Peter 1:1-4**

In 1:1–4 the main point was that God has given all believers Divine Power to lead lives devoted to Brotherly Kindness and Love; and that this Power becomes effective in real life when we stake everything joyfully on His precious and very great Promises. So, when we keep the great and attractive Reward of God's Promises in front of us- they exert on us a Divine Power to draw us on into the excellent Path of godly Love and into Eternal Life.

### **2Peter 1:5-11**

Then in 1:5–11 we are taught that God's Divine Power is given to us not to make us lazy or limp, but to make us zealous and diligent to advance in every Christian Virtue. The Evil, remaining in our hearts; and the pressures and temptations of Unrighteousness in the world; are like an ocean current drawing us backward toward Destruction. So, no one who “treads water” in the Christian life stays in the same place. They *always* go backward. Therefore, we must stroke diligently *against* the current of Evil Desires within; and innumerable Temptations without. And in doing this (as v. 10 says) we Confirm our Calling and Election.

So, the *genuineness* of our Confidence in the Promises of God (by which we are saved) is confirmed by the Diligence with which we stake our lives on those Promises in efforts to live like Jesus.

### **2Peter 1:12-19**

Then in 1:12–19 Peter zeroes in on the Promise of Christ's Second Coming and says that this “**prophetic word**” has been made “**more sure**” by his own eyewitness Experience of Christ's Majesty on the Mount of Transfiguration. So, what Peter, James, and John were granted to see in the Transfiguration of Christ was a partial glimpse of what Christ will be like- when He comes again. And in verse 19, Peter compares that Hope to a Lamp shining in the spiritual Night. So, the “**prophetic word**” of Hope is our Lamp in the dark night of this world. It functions just like that great and attractive Reward- to keep us on the Path until the day dawns externally; and the Morning Star (Jesus) “rises” or becomes *dominant* in our hearts. So, in a word, this Chapter has said:

**Be a people empowered by *Hope* to lead lives of godly *Love*.**

Let your *Confidence* in the coming Day of Joy of Christ's Return cause you to be *compassionate* in the present Nighttime of seemingly endless Woe.

So, now we want to devote the rest of our time this morning to thinking about verses 20 and 21. First let's look at the connection between verses 19 and 20. All the modern English versions that I consulted made it *harder* rather than *easier* to understand the connection in the original Greek. They all begin a new sentence at verse 20 (and the NASB even inserts a totally unwarranted “**But**”). But verse 20 is NOT a new sentence in the original. And the English version that does the best job of *preserving* the intent of the original is the old King James Version, which translates verse 20 like this:

**“*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*”**

Remember that in verse 19, Peter is telling us to pay attention to the “prophetic word” about the Second Coming of Christ *as to a Lamp shining in a dark place*. So, you can hear the connection when we boil the two verses down like this:

“Pay close attention to the “prophetic word” . . . knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.”

... so, there is a very close connection between what we know about Prophecy in verse 20; and our giving heed to it in verse 19.

But what is that connection? I see two possibilities. *First*, verse 20 may give the *Reason* why we should give heed to the “prophetic word”. And we could paraphrase it like this:

"Give heed to the prophetic word *because* you know, first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation."

The *other* possible connection would be that verse 20 tells us NOT the *Reason*- but the *Way* to give heed to the prophetic word. And we could paraphrase that like this:

"Give heed to the prophetic word *by* remembering this Principle first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation."

So, it seems to me that in verse 20 Peter is either giving us a *Reason* to pay close attention to the prophetic word, or it is telling us *how* to pay attention to the prophetic word.

So, which one is it? But before we can decide that- we have to know what verse 20 means. What does Peter mean that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation," or, as the RSV says, "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation"? I think it is only fair for me to mention three ways this verse has been historically understood, and then show why I only accept one of these ways.

First, there are excellent evangelical Bible scholars who say that verse 20 has nothing to do with our interpretation of Prophecy, but rather with the OT Prophet's interpretation of History. In other words, when Peter says, "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation," he means, "no prophecy ever came from an OT *Prophet's* private interpretation of historical events." Rather, as verse 21 says, Prophecies came *from God* through the Holy Spirit. So, the connection with verse 19 would be:

"Give heed to the prophetic word . . . because no prophecy is a mere private human interpretation of events; it is from God through the Spirit."

... and I find that understanding of verse 20 very persuasive- yet not quite.

A second very important understanding of verse 20 is the typical Roman Catholic one. They have generally said, "*Verse 20 refers to how we interpret Prophecy, NOT how the OT Prophets interpreted History.*" And the

point is that no private individual can interpret Prophecy on his own. Rather the Scriptures have been entrusted to the Church, and therefore, individual believers must now look to the official pronouncements of the "Leaders of the Church" (Popes; Cardinals; Bishops, etc.) to know the true Teaching of Scripture."

Now until my lifetime- with the advent of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, that kind of thinking had kept the Scriptures concealed in Latin; and had kept the average Catholic lay person in woeful ignorance of the Scriptures. Much of that is changing- yet not nearly enough. Case in point is that recently, a Pastor friend of mine, read a letter from a priest over in California to a young man in my friend's Church- urging him not to forfeit his "connection" with the Catholic Church and its Sacraments; and in three pages there was not a single reference to Scripture- anywhere. And the distinct impression that this Catholic priest gave in the letter- was that had he used Scripture to argue for his position- he would have been compromising his Principles. Because, evidently, it is still true for many Catholics, that they *genuinely* believe that their "religious system" gives credibility to the Scriptures- and therefore, the Scriptures are *secondary* in importance.

Sadly, this is the very *same* problem with many who lay claim to be "Reformed." In their public and official Testimony- it is "Scripture; Scripture; and Scripture. But in their everyday practice- "Ecclesiastical Tradition" (what the Reformers said; or what the Confessions say)- and NOT Scripture- reigns supreme.

And I have done my level best to teach you, that, while I agree that "*Reformed Theology is the correct exegesis of Scripture*"- we must always keep in mind that every one of our spiritual heroes from the Reformation had "clay feet". They were all wicked sinners- made Righteous by Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ. So, as we proudly testify as to our Protestant Position (*Sola Scriptura; Sola Fide; Solus Christus; Sola Gratia; Soli Deo Gloria; and Ecclesia Semper Reformanda*)- we always need to take heed, that one of the Hallmarks of our Protestant Faith is that the Church and its Ministers are judged by Scripture- and NOT vice versa.

So, I will mention one other way of understanding verse 20. "No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" means no individual should interpret Prophecy (or Scripture) according to his *own* personal whim. You can't just give Scripture any old meaning that suites your fancy. There is one true meaning of every verse. One.

So, it really doesn't matter what a particular verse may mean to us. All that matters is what that verse meant to the man, who was "moved" by God the Holy Spirit to write it down- at that time. So, according to verse 21- there is one meaning of every verse which comes from God through the Prophet (or Apostle, etc.), who wrote it down. And THAT is our Standard.

Now which of these three views of verse 20 is most likely Peter's view? As far as the usual Catholic interpretation is concerned- you simply can't arrive at that from the text. Peter did NOT teach that the Leaders of the Church are the only ones who get the Scriptures accurately. There is not a single statement from any of the biblical writers about who might replace the individual believer as the reliable interpreter of Prophecy. That understanding has to be "*read into*" the text- because it CANNOT be "taken out" of it. So, as far as I am concerned, this is just another Man-made doctrine that the Roman religious system made up. And therefore, it should be categorically *rejected* by believers.

So, for me, the choice is between the first and third views. So, is verse 20, saying that no Prophecy is the result of a Prophet's private interpretation of History? Or, is it saying that no Prophecy, after it is given, should be twisted by individuals to make it mean whatever they like?

I think you can say both. Because if a Prophet of God didn't trust his own interpretation- why should we? So, I see verse 20 as a Divine Warning to us- not to play fast and loose with the meaning of Scripture.

Now I have another reason to believe this. The very next word from Peter- that begins Chapter 2- is all about false Teachers- *twisting* the Word of God and causing it to mean something that it doesn't mean. And as we get into this- we need to realize that the false Teachers of Peter's day NEVER denied the full inspiration of Scripture. They also did NOT deny the inspiration of the Prophets- or even of the NT Books that had already been written at the time Peter wrote this Book. No, they simply *twisted* the *meaning* of Scriptures to suit their own false Teaching.

And we know that Peter had false Teachers in mind when he wrote verses 20&21 of Chapter 1- because the very next sentence in 2:1 says,

**But false prophets also arose among the people [the OT Jews], just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.**



... and the key text for understanding how these false Teachers related to Scripture is found in **2Peter 3:14-16**:

**Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.**

Here, Peter says that the Apostle Paul has written about similar things in his letters. Then he says,

**speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.**

Now this last phrase equates what Paul wrote with the OT Scriptures- giving the NT *equal* Divine Inspiration with the OT. And this shows us that Peter believed that the Revelation of God to Man (Scripture) was ongoing through the time of the Apostles.

But it also shows how the false Teachers of Peter's day related to the Old Testament Scriptures. They DON'T reject them. They DON'T deny that those Prophecies (Scriptures) came from God. They simply *twist* the *meaning* of those Scriptures to suit their own private, and sinful Purposes.

Therefore, since Peter is concerned in this Epistle with false Teachers, who twist the meaning of Scripture to fit their own personal desires- the most likely meaning of verse 20 is that the Scriptures may NOT be handled that way. So, "No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation," means then, "no individual is entitled to interpret Prophecy, or Scripture, according to his personal whim".

So, now we can see the connection between verses 19 and 20 more clearly. When Peter says, "**Give heed to the prophetic word as to a lamp shining in a dark place . . . *knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation,***" what he means is, "Pay close and careful attention to the prophetic word, and the first principle to guide you in *how* to pay attention is the principle that the true meaning of Scripture does not come from the mind of the reader." Or to put it another way: the Principle that should guide our

attention to Scripture is that its meaning is “Objective”, NOT “Subjective”. The meaning of Scripture does not change with every new reader; or every new reading. It cannot be twisted to mean whatever we like. It is what it is, unchanging and unending.

So, the first Principle, therefore, in giving heed to Scripture is that there is one *true* meaning and there are many *false* meanings. And we must submit our minds to trace out what is really there- rather than *presuming* that whatever pops into our minds at our first reading is the true meaning.

So, what verse 21 does- is to give the Reason why we MUST NOT; we CANNOT treat Scripture as though its meaning is *whatever* someone thinks it means. The interpretation of Scripture dare not be a matter of personal whim because Peter says, **no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

So, the Reason we may not fill the Words of Scripture with *our own* thoughts and ideas- is because God intends that they carry *His* Thoughts and His Ideas. The meaning of Scripture is NOT like putty that we can mold according to our desires. It is the gracious Work of the Holy Spirit; and carries a solid, firm, Divine Intention. The glorious Truth of this verse is that, in Scripture, *God* has spoken- and NOT merely Man. Therefore, (as verse 20 says) *our* Goal must be to hear *God's* Meaning- NOT our own.

Now let me try to show how verses 20 and 21 fit into the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter as a whole and then draw out several Implications for our lives. Peter's main Goal in Chapter 1 is to help us confirm our Calling and Election (v. 10). He wants us to enjoy the Assurance of our Salvation. And as a Means to that End- he reminds us that the *genuineness* of Saving Faith (v. 1) is proved by whether it produces Virtue; Knowledge; Self-control; Perseverance; Godliness; Brotherly Kindness; and Love (vv. 5–7). But he also reminds us that God has already given us the Power we need to live this way (v. 3). And he has told us that this Power becomes *effective* in our daily lives through God's precious and magnificent Promises.

So, as we keep our hearts content in the Promises of God- we are guarded from sinful Allurements. And we are drawn on into the Path of Righteousness- into Eternal Life. And where are these Promises to be found? Where shall we go to fan the flames of our Hope? Peter's answer in verse 19: the “prophetic word”; or the Scriptures.

So, do you need Encouragement that the day is really going to dawn- that the Life of Self-control, Perseverance, Brotherly Kindness; and Love is

really leading to Glory? Then go to the Scriptures. Go daily. Go long. Go deep. And go often. And when you go- remember this first: Scripture is NOT the mere words of men; they are the Words of God

**"Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (v. 21).**

So, seek *God's* Meaning in the Words of Scripture- and you will find the Lamp of Hope. For as the apostle Paul said,

#### **Romans 15:4**

**For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

Now I want to give you three brief Implications of verses 20 and 21 for us. And they are based on three words: "Discipline"; "Humility"; and "God the Spirit."

Suppose that you are a platoon leader and have been trapped with your platoon behind enemy lines. And your commanding officer smuggles a coded message to you to inform you how to get out. What do you do with that message? Do you pass it around the platoon and collect everyone's ideas and then flip a coin to decide what it means? No. You sit down and you labor to break the code. Why? Because the impressions of your platoon are not what matters. That won't help anyone. The mind of your commander is all that matters. So, your labor to interpret that message has one Goal- what did the commander wish to communicate? So, you submit yourself to the severe Discipline of Memory; and Analysis; and Construction, until you have assurance that *his* meaning and not your own- has been found. And then you stake your life on it.

So it is, with God's Word. *God's* Intention comes to us in human language. "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke (in Hebrew; Greek; and Aramaic) from God."

**Question:** How may we know the "Mind (Will) of God?"

**Answer:** God has ordained that *some* in His family submit to the Discipline of mastering the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic languages. Others will become proficient in using software- so that they may "break the code" and open God's Intentions into the English language and the other languages of

the world. Yet even English is a kind of code. So, good children must adopt the Discipline of learning to read it. And the more disciplined we are in construing God's Meaning *out* of Scripture instead of pouring our own ideas *into* Scripture- the *closer* we will get to understand what God has said. And the *more* we comprehend what God has said and what He has promised- the more Power we can have for Godliness.

The second Implication is "Humility". If you believe that the Bible is the Word of God with Authority over your life- then it takes a good deal of Humility to interpret it correctly. The reason is simple: the Bible often requires of us that we think and act in ways that go *against* our natural inclinations. Therefore, the only person who will own up to these uncomfortable Teachings is the humble person- who is broken and who trembles at God's Word. That is the only kind of person, who will open himself before the Lordship of Jesus Christ- and who will be ready to do whatever He says.

The proud person, who wants to give lip service to the Bible, will *twist* the Scriptures to fit his own desires. So, in the long run, sound Interpretation comes only from the broken and contrite in spirit.

Finally, both Discipline and Humility are the result of the *indwelling* of God the Holy Spirit in the believer. You see, we have great need for the Assistance of the Holy Spirit when we read the Scriptures. If He does not overcome our proud heart; and rebellious nature- we will *never* submit to the harsh and insulting Truths of Scripture. We will *avoid* them or *distort* them. Yet the Work of the Spirit is NOT to add new information to the Scriptures (or take any away), but to make us sensitive and submissive to what is already there. It was through men, "*moved by the Holy Spirit*" that God spoke in the Scriptures. And therefore, today it will be people, "yielded to the Holy Spirit"- who hear His Voice most clearly in the Scriptures.

Therefore, let us give heed daily the prophetic Word with all Discipline and Humility and with a full reliance on the Spirit- knowing this first,

**... that 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.**

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.