

**SOMETHING MORE SURE (2 Peter 1:12-21)**  
**Sunday, April 25, 2010 – Summit EFC – Pastor Doug Corlew**

Welcome everybody! Are you ready for the meal? Did you bring your spiritual appetite? Jesus said, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*” (**Matt 4:4**). It’s feeding time, so let’s open our Bibles to the “ancient words” found in **2 Peter chapter 1** this morning.

In his book, Your God Is Too Safe, **Mark Buchanan** makes this observation: *Curious times, these. There is simultaneously a glut of the word of God and a famine of it, a drought and deluge. We have every translation of the Bible you can imagine – the NIV, the NEVG, the KJV, the NJKV, the NASR, NRSV, the preacher’s bible, the worshippers bible, the spirit-filled believers bible, the left-handed bald gypsy fiddler’s bible, with versions for the nearsighted and the farsighted. (The last was made up.) You can have it in hardback, paper, leather, cloth, in pink, red, oxblood, turtle shell, iridescent orange, psychedelic paisley, with maps and charts and indices and appendices and concordances and holograms of the temple in the back, and a little sleeve with a CD-ROM that takes you on a guided tour of the Holy Land. The food is out there – and it’s a banqueting table. We’re just picky eaters. Oh, we’re buying Bibles. And sometimes we’re even reading them. But there’s not much evidence that we’re studying them. We’re nibbling, not devouring. And you are what you eat... Borderland is a virtual colony of biblical anorexics and bulimics, where appetites range from everything BUT the truth.*

**Brian H. Edwards** is coming to Summit in May, and Nothing But The Truth will be our theme for this four-day Bible Conference. One of his many books bears that title, and today is week #3 in our 5 week ABF series examining the reliability of Scripture and using Brian Edwards’ video teaching as our guide.

So this morning we want to ask the question, “What’s the big deal about the Bible, anyway? I’m sure it’s of interest to people who love classic literature,” you might say, “and I know that pastors have to study it. But it’s a rather large and intimidating book and I don’t always understand it when I do read it. So why should this ancient book be a priority in *my* busy life today?”

In **2 Peter 1**, Peter begins his letter with an appeal for his readers to grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ. *Know to Grow* was our theme last summer as we took an in-depth look at the first 11 verses of this chapter, and the various character qualities that mark the life of a growing believer.

Then beginning in **v 12-21**, Peter writes: *Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. 16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths 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, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

For my outline this morning, I’m borrowing three phrases **Warren Wiersbe** uses to highlight three reasons we should devour this Book, building our lives on the solid foundation of God’s Holy Word:

1<sup>st</sup>, because **PEOPLE DIE, BUT THE WORD LIVES**. We see this in v 12-15, where Peter speaks of his impending death. *I know that the putting off of my body will be soon*, he says. Somehow the Lord had made that clear to him, he says in v 14, and so now, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, Peter is concerned that these early believers remember his teaching when he is gone.

v 12 – *I intend always to remind you of these qualities*. Do you ever forget things? We all do, so Peter writes in v 13 *to stir you up by way of reminder*. And again in v 15 – *so you may be able at any time to recall these things*.

Last summer Mark Shea fell off a ladder. Do you remember that, Mark? Good! Because in the fall he suffered a concussion with short-term memory loss. So just like any good friend would do, his buddy Chris Rasmussen went to visit him in the hospital, and do you know what Chris said? He said, “Mark, do you have that \$5 for me yet, that you borrowed last Friday?” Then an hour later he asked him again, “Do you have that \$5 for me that I loaned you?” By the end of the day I think he had emptied Mark’s wallet!

Sometimes we all feel like we suffer from amnesia, and *spiritual* amnesia is the most dangerous kind. We forget what we ought to remember, and we remember what we ought to forget! Or we have a tendency to get so accustomed to certain truths that we begin to take them for granted and they no longer stir our soul.

Even if we are already *established* in the faith, that’s no guarantee that we will always *remember* the truth and apply it. If your spiritual life needs to be re-ignited, beware of abandoning the basic truths of the gospel in search of something more relevant or contemporary. Often we don’t need any *new* teaching; we just need to be reminded and stirred up concerning the things we already know.

Because Peter is aware that his time on earth is short, he wants to write a last will and testament to see to it that what he has learned from Jesus Christ will be *remembered* and put to use for Christ’s sake when he is gone. And that’s why we have the book of 2 Peter.

If the Lord told you this afternoon that your time is short, what would you devote yourself to? Would you become passive in the face of death, or would you earnestly strive to ensure that your last few months or years would produce lasting fruit for the kingdom of God?

Undoubtedly, some of us *are* in our last few months or years though we have no idea. What will we leave behind when we are gone? Are you remembering the things that are really important, and helping others to remember, so they can live out their faith and prepare for their own eternity? One reason the Holy Spirit was given to the church was to remind believers of the lessons already learned.

Jesus said to the disciples, *“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* (John 14:25-26)

That’s good news for those suffering from “Spiritual Alzheimer’s”! God has given His children a new nature, and reinforced our ability to remember with the continual presence of the Holy Spirit. But God’s Word is the *tool* the Spirit uses to remind us of the truths we need for living well.

In fact, this promise of Jesus is specifically directed to the apostles as a guarantee that the Spirit would guide them as they wrote down the words that would become our New Testament. The church of Jesus Christ is always one generation away from extinction. If there were no dependable written revelation, we would be at the mercy of people’s memories, depending on word-of-mouth tradition. And we all know how a simple sentence can be changed when passed on orally from one person to another!

Thank God, we do not depend on the traditions of dead men; we depend on the truth of the living Word. If Peter could see us now, he would be delighted that his letter was preserved in Scripture, and 2,000 years later he is still reminding us of the great promises of God! Because people die, but the Word lives forever.

**2<sup>nd</sup>, EXPERIENCES FADE, BUT THE WORD REMAINS.** We see this in **v 16-18** where Peter reminisces about his mountaintop experience with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. And he uses this experience to emphasize the one truth his readers are most in need of remembering in their present circumstances: the return of Jesus Christ in glory and judgment at the end of history.

We talked about this last Sunday as we completed our study in the Gospel of Mark by looking at **Mark 13** and Jesus' promise to come in clouds with great power and glory in order to separate the elect from those who have not received Him, and bring an end to human history.

I asked, "Do we really believe this is real?" The doctrine of the second coming is easy to mock, and even in the first century, Peter's readers were already being exposed to false teachers who were denying it. Why? Because if there is no coming day of judgment, there is nothing to fear. We don't have to worry about possessing a living and active faith. We can do whatever we want; what difference does it make?

So if you look at **2 Peter 3:3-4**, Peter says, *knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."*

The false teachers were trying to discredit the teaching of the apostles about Christ's return, dismissing those ideas as fables or myths. "Peter and the other apostles have duped you," they were saying. "They have filled your minds with silly notions about a second coming. Instead of looking to some fairy tale future, why not focus on the present? Party on! Eat, drink, and be merry!"

How does Peter respond? **v 16** - *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

Notice: Peter is absolutely confident in Christ's future coming in glory because he has already seen it in the past. The difference between mythical speculations and Christian faith is history. Our doctrines are not the result of clever imagination. They are the result of historical observation, eyewitness testimony.

**v 17-18** - *For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.*

The event Peter is describing is obviously the Transfiguration. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record that event, although none of those writers actually participated in it! Peter was there when it happened, along with James and **John**, who wrote, *we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (1:14).*

When Jesus walked the earth, He did not display His glory openly. His face didn't shine; He didn't have a halo over His head. He looked like an ordinary man. People of Jesus' day saw Him as a carpenter and a preacher. The majesty of the second person of the godhead was veiled in flesh.

But on that special day, when Jesus invited three men to join Him on that holy mountain, the veil was lifted. They saw His true glory with their own eyes. With their own ears they heard the Father's voice from heaven, identifying Jesus as His beloved Son. This was no myth or fable; it was a historical event.

Just six days prior to this event, Jesus had promised that some of the disciples would *not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power (Mark 9:1)*. Peter saw it! He saw the kingdom of God coming with power. In other words, what he saw was a preview of the glory of the second coming of Christ! Folks, the reason Peter is so *certain* of the second coming is that he has already seen it!

Now writing 30 years later, that revelation of the majesty of Christ on the mountain is still filling Peter's mind with awe, and he wants more than anything to share the hope of that vision with us before he dies. Because it is this glorious, majestic nature of King Jesus Christ, hidden during His earthly life, which will be revealed to all the world at the time of His return.

You and I will be eyewitnesses of the Majestic Glory on that day. But Peter was there for the preview, and the Holy Spirit not only moved him to faithfully record his experience in a letter, but the Spirit has also preserved this letter for us as one of the 66 books in our Bible, so that down through the ages,

*The man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:17)*. You see, everything we need to know to trust and obey God fully is included in the Scriptures! We are at no disadvantage.

Peter begins this letter by addressing his readers as *those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ (1:1)*. The apostles didn't travel first-class and leave us to travel second class! We have obtained a faith of equal standing with theirs.

It is not necessary for us to try to duplicate the apostle's experiences. In fact, such attempts would be dangerous, for the devil could give us a counterfeit experience to lead us astray. Experiences are subjective, but the Word of God is objective. Experiences may be interpreted in different ways by different people, but the Word of God gives one clear message. What we remember about our experiences can be unconsciously distorted, but the Word of God remains the same forever!

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4)*.

Although we were not on the Mount of Transfiguration, we can still benefit from that experience as we meditate on the *Word* of God and permit the *Spirit* of God to reveal the majestic glory of the *Son* of God to us. Because people die, but the Word lives. Experiences fade, but the Word remains.

And 3<sup>rd</sup>, **THE WORLD DARKENS, BUT THE WORD SHINES**. In v 19-21 Peter encourages those living in spiritually dark places to take heart in the brightness of God's Word. And in so doing he gives us one of the most important passages in all the Bible regarding the nature of God's Word. Having already called forth the witness of the first-hand testimony of the apostles –

Peter goes on to say in v 19, *And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*. Notice what this verse tells us about our Bibles.

1<sup>st</sup>, it is **The Sure Word**. Peter is not suggesting that Old Testament prophecies are more sure than the experience he had on the Mount of Transfiguration. What Christ showed him was real and true, and as an apostle, his written record of that experience is authoritative and reliable.

But the Old Testament prophecies of Christ are made even more sure because of the apostles' testimonies. The prophetic Word was corroborated by what Peter saw and heard, so we now have an Old Testament and a New Testament. God spoke once and He spoke again. He used both the Old Testament prophets

and the New Testament apostles to record His truth, and they all convey the same message. There is an amazing unity in this book, though written by 40 men over a period of 1,600 years.

You can trust the Bible! *The testimony of the Lord is sure*, the psalmist says (**Psalm 19:7**). *Your decrees are very trustworthy (93:5)*. *Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right (119:128)*. We haven't followed cleverly devised myths; we have something more sure, the very Word of God Himself.

2<sup>nd</sup>, it is **The Shining Word**. When I go to bed at night, I am always in trouble if the living room light by the front door is the last one left on in the house, because when I turn it off, I still have to pass through the living room into the dining room and up the stairs and down the hall to my bedroom. There are a lot of chances to stumble or run into a wall or stub my toe, and I usually do!

Well, the world is a spiritually dark place. The picture Peter uses here is that it is now night time. The world is covered with the darkness of sin and deceit and fear and greed. Everyone who lives in this age of darkness is in danger of stumbling over some unexpected temptation or falsehood. Our only hope to survive the night is to have a lamp going before us. And Peter says the prophetic word is that lamp.

The image is a common one in Scripture: *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105)*. God is light, His Word is light, and His true children walk in the light.

We are called to be *blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life (Philippians 2:15-16)*. This is why we must govern our lives by what Scripture says.

For unbelievers, things will get darker and darker, until they end up in eternal darkness. But God's people walk in the light, looking for the return of Jesus Christ and the dawning of a new day. Before the day dawns, the morning star always appears, and in Scripture – Jesus Christ is called *the bright morning star (Rev 22:16)*. The promise of His coming shines brightly no matter how dark the night may be.

His coming will mean judgment for those who do not know Him. But through the prophet **Malachi**, the Lord says, *for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings (4:1)*. So *pay attention* to this Word, as Peter says in **v 19!** Pay attention!! Don't ignore the Word, but live by it. Jesus is coming. No one knows when, but I can tell you this:

*Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:11-12)*.

The Bible is no ordinary Book. This is the sure Word, the shining Word –

And 3<sup>rd</sup>, this is **The Spirit-Given Word**. **v 20-21** - *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

What makes this passage so intriguing is that it's the closest Scripture ever comes to giving an explanation of *how* these words came to us: the *process* of inspiration. **2 Timothy 3:16** tells us, *All Scripture is breathed out by God*, but **2 Peter 1** helps us also understand the *human* element in this Book.

*Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*. This was a familiar word to the sailor because it was used to describe how a sailing ship was carried along by the wind. Peter used to be a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, so he knew how the wind could carry along a boat. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit moved human authors along so that the words they recorded were the very words of God.

It's not that God dictated His words to them when they were in a trance and had no part in the process. No, the words of Scripture bear the imprint of human authors: there are differences in writing style and vocabulary. The writer's education, experiences, and personality shine through. So the human authors used their own words, but the words they used were also just those words that God wanted them to be.

*No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man.* In other words, Isaiah did not get out of bed one morning and say, "I don't have anything to do today, I think I'll write some prophecies!" Instead, the prophets were gripped by God as He spoke to them and gave them *His* message to communicate. The source of the message is God.

**Brian Edwards** uses a military image to illustrate it like this: *An officer may send a warning to the platoon of some danger that threatens it. The messenger is given a carefully prepared message which he delivers faithfully and exactly. The message is not his own, but the urgency of his voice and the excitement of his gestures are. The message has become part of his thinking and action. He feels the urgency, and although everyone knows that he is passing on the very words of the commanding office, the soldiers can rightly claim, 'That man's message is very important.'* So it is with the human writers of the Bible. *The ultimate origin is not from themselves; they received it from God. It was not written for them on a sheet of paper, as in the case of our military messenger, but in their minds, and it became so much a part of their thinking that it was their own message. They spoke it or wrote it with all the force and enthusiasm they could. It was exactly God's message, given by men.*

Today some professing Christians will say that because God used human authors, there are inevitable errors that appear in the Bible. What do you think about that? The response should be this: if *men spoke from God*, and if *All Scripture is God-breathed*, that means all the words of Scripture are literally God's Words. And since God cannot lie, all the words of Scripture *must* be true. If you agree with that, then you agree with Jesus who said *Scripture cannot be broken* and *Your Word is Truth* (**John 10:35; 17:17**).

This is no mere academic quibbling either, because the authority of Scripture to challenge our beliefs and actions is directly dependent on its full truthfulness. Once we allow for mistakes in the Bible in matters of history, geography, etc, then we have no way of limiting those mistakes. Each person simply becomes his or her own judge, standing over Scripture to decide what parts to accept and what parts to reject.

Feminists seeking to avoid Biblical role distinctions will say that the apostles were unable to overcome the biases of their male-dominated society. Homosexuals seeking to avoid Biblical condemnation for their lifestyle will suggest that the Biblical authors were simply reflecting the homophobia of their Jewish culture. American Christians, wanting to maintain their luxurious and wasteful lifestyle, will suggest that Biblical passages about wealth reflect lower-class prejudices. The list could go on and on.

I won't deny that even two people committed to Scripture's authority can have differing interpretations of a text. But if their positions are irreconcilable, then one of them is right and one of them is wrong. Their differences can be resolved through honest and humble discussion, but once we compromise the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scripture, we have no objective basis to even search for truth.

Jesus said, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (**Matthew 4:4**), and Mark Buchanan is right. The food is right before us, and it's a banqueting table. May we not be picky eaters, or those who just nibble at their food. But may we be hungry for the truth, ready to devour the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. May we be as the prophet who said to the Lord, *Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts* (**Jeremiah 15:16**). Amen.