

3. The trustworthy Word

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I am sure that just about all of you have heard phrases, “God told me...” or “The Holy Spirit spoke to me...”, some believers often use them to add importance and spirituality to whatever they say or do. How can you argue with somebody who is dropping the name of God, unless it is obviously wrong?

It is one thing for a person in congregation level to start this silly thing, but it is a completely dangerous thing when a leader starts to come up with his own doctrines that are against the Word of God, they fool many followers and the result is anything but pleasing to the Lord.

The best defense against false teaching is true living. A church filled with growing Christians, vibrant in their faith, is not likely to fall prey to apostates with their counterfeit Christianity. But this Christian living must be based on the authority of the Word of God. False teachers find it easy to seduce people who do not know their Bible but who desire of “experiences” with the Lord. It is a dangerous thing to build on subjective experience alone and ignore objective revelation.

As I talk with people who claim to be born-again Christians, I find that the majority of Christians do not know the Bible as they should. They may carry their Bibles back and forth to church, but their Bibles do not make any effect in their lives because they do not study them and do not believe that whatever the Bible says has the final authority.

A. ESTABLISHING THE TRUTH

2 Peter 1:12-15 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

Apostle Peter wanted to remain faithful to his calling as an apostle and serving the Lord diligently until his last breath. This is something all the teachers of the Bible must learn and imitate.

Peter knew that he was going to die, so he wanted to leave behind something that would never die – the written Word of God. His two epistles became a part of the inspired Scriptures, and they have been ministering to the saints for centuries. Most Bible scholars believe that the Spirit used Peter to give John Mark some of the data for his book – “The Gospel according to Mark”. One of the church fathers, Papias, said that Mark was Peter’s disciple.

God hasn’t hidden His truth so that we must grope for it in the stars or behind superstitious feelings. He has given it to us in written form so that we might continually read, study and apply it.

Knowing that his death is imminent, Peter wants his readers to remember that there is truth they can rely on. For Peter, truth was objective, something he could leave behind with the assurance that it would provide everything pertaining to life and godliness.

Nowadays, people think that the truth is rather subjective and relative. It is no longer objective which people want to find out at any cost.

A sports team going for the championship will practice the same fundamentals over and over again. They do this, even though they know the techniques, because they know what is at stake.

For this reason, Christians should never get tired hearing the basics of the Christian life. We should rejoice every time Jesus Christ and His Gospel and plan for our lives is preached.

When we lay aside the fundamental basics of Christianity, that is when the devil brings in confusing doctrines or experience driven concepts over the truth of the Bible. It is a very effective strategy in the past, present and future. Remember this, the church of Jesus Christ is always one generation away from extinction.

B. NOT FABLES, BUT FACTS

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

The word 'fable' comes from a Greek word 'mytho' which gives us our word 'myth'. But what Peter says is not fables, but an eyewitnessed fact. He was there at the Mount of Transfiguration when it happened.

Matthew 17:1-8 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

If there is anyone who could say, "God told me" with confidence, it would have been Peter.

At the transfiguration, Jesus was transformed in glory before the apostles, not merely changed in outward appearance. The effect was extremely striking. Jesus became so bright in appearance that it was hard to look at Jesus. He shined like the sun.

One may say that this shining glory was not a new miracle, but a "pause" in an ongoing miracle. The real miracle was that Jesus, most of the time, could keep from displaying His glory.

C. HEARING GOD'S VOICE

2 Peter 1:17-18 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

If you are like me, we would love to hear the voice of God. Does it sound like Charlton Heston's voice from the Ten Commandments movie – deep and a lot of echoes? Especially, when we are waiting for His answers, we would like to hear His voice in person.

The devil, his cohorts and human con artists have been using people's desires to hear God's voice to their benefits.

Folks, we have the voice of God – the Bible. We don't need to wait for some thunderous voice to come from heaven. In addition to that, the very God Himself resides in our hearts as we learned last Sunday. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Bible verses as we study and memorize them.

D. THE CONFIRMED WORD

2 Peter 1:19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

The Word of God itself is more sure and more confirmed than all of the experiences of Peter. That is what we have.

When we rely on sources other than Scripture for truth, we are casting our lives upon a sea of uncertainty. Feelings, circumstances, stars, these all fluctuate. And to trust in them is to open ourselves to being seriously deluded and led into error. God's written Word, however, never changes and, when properly applied, will never lead anyone into error.

The Greek term Peter uses for 'dark' means "murky." The prince of darkness has turned this world, which began as a garden, into a murky swamp. And if we're to avoid becoming mired in that darkness, we must heed the light of God's Word until the Morning Star, the light of the world, returns.

E. THE ASSURED WORD BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

2 Peter 1:20-21 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

I quote this v20 so many times until now. I mentioned it as individual person's interpretation of the prophecies. I now believe that I was wrong in that part if we stay in contexts.

The word translated "private" simply means "one's own" or "its own." The suggestion is, since all Scripture is inspired by the Spirit it must all "hang together" and no one Scripture should be divorced from the others. You can use the Bible to prove almost anything if you isolate verses from their proper context, which is exactly the approach the false teachers use.

In other words, the only way these false teachers can "prove" their heretical doctrines is by misusing the Word of God. Isolated texts, apart from contexts, become pretexts.

The Word of God was written to common people, not to theological professors. The writers assumed that common people could read it, understand it, and apply it, led by the same Holy Spirit who inspired it. The humble individual believer can learn about God as he reads and meditates on the Word of God. He does not need the

“experts” to show him truth. However, this does not deny the ministry of teachers in the church, special people who have a gift for explaining and applying the Scriptures.

Men die, but the Word lives. Experiences fade, but the Word of God remains. The world grows darker, but the prophetic light shines brighter. The believer who builds his life on the Word of God and who looks for the coming of the Savior is not likely to be led astray by false teachers. He will be taught by the Spirit and grounded on the sure Word of God.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) Be careful to add God’s approval onto yours.

Unless you are absolutely beyond the shadow of doubt, do not assume that God approved it. It is better to say, “I believe that the Lord spoke to me regarding...” rather than “The Lord spoke to me regarding...” Give yourself a room for an error.

2) When we turn to God’s Word, we’re consulting the most reliable of all sources.

2) When we make other sources – experiences, dreams, feelings, stars – equal to or more reliable than the Scriptures, we will soon fall into error.