

WITH TRUST

2 Peter 1:12-21

What or in whom can we trust? It is truly amazing how much information that is available on the internet. About once a month I will get an email that has a dire warning about some really bad virus that may be sent in an email or there is some pending legislation that will shut down all the churches in the country. Some people just see these things (apparently believe them) and pass them along to others. Usually, if a little checking is done, it becomes evident that there is no truth in what is being claimed. The question of “trust” arises all the time in the political realm and we are seeing such questions in business dealings being more prevalent than they were several decades ago. That should cause us to ask the question that Pilate asked of Jesus: “What is truth?” That question was prompted by a statement that Jesus had just made where He gave as clear a statement as we can find as to why He came into the world. In John 18:37, He said “To this end I was born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.”

Ironically, Jesus had answered Pilate’s question in His prayer time before His arrest. In John 17:17 Jesus said “Sanctify them (His followers) through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.” If we really want the truth, then we must start with the Word of God.

Defend Your Testimony – 1:12-15

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. 2 Peter 1:12-15 (NASB95)

If we know the truth about something, do we have an obligation to share that truth with others and then to keep reminding them of what we have already told them? This sense of obligation was a driving force in Peter’s life. He realized the importance of walking in the truth of God’s revelation as a means for people to get the maximum benefit of their time on earth and to enhance what they will have (their rewards) in eternity. If we think about the consequences, what could be more important?

How can we “always be ready” so that we can follow the example set for us by Peter? This may be the same idea that Paul expressed in his advice to be “instant, in season and out of season.” The first requirement is that we must know the truth. The second requirement is that we need to apply the truth to various situations that we encounter in life. Doing this association of relating what we see happening all around us to the word of God takes some discipline at first and then it becomes somewhat routine as we train our thinking to make those connections. Thinking in this way helps to stir up such truths in our own minds and makes it easier to bring out such reminders when we are interacting with others. Jesus set an example of teaching the truth in ways that it can be remembered and related to life. The use of parables and morality stories are helpful in both remembering and relating.

One of the objectives that Peter had was to teach and remind people of the truth so that they would be able to recall it and apply it long after he was gone. This would tell us that our teaching and reminders should be memorable and make a lasting impression. Things that had happened in his life had made a lasting impression on him. He reminded his readers that he had seen what had happen on the mount of transfiguration and he had heard the voice of God confirming that Jesus of Nazareth was God’s beloved Son, in Whom He was well pleased. An

experience like that leaves no doubt as to the reality of the truth of the Scriptures and provides tremendous confidence when that is coupled by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

Eyewitness Accounts – 1:16-18

¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷For 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. 2 Peter 1:16-18 (NASB95)

How can we apply what Peter said regarding his teaching and message to these Christians to the way we witness to others? How many times have we heard someone say, “all this Bible stuff is just a bunch of fairy tales that have no substance?” What would cause someone to make such a statement? To answer this question, we might think about the times when the “public” has a chance to see the church and its impact on the community. What are the occasions where the church is featured in the local newspaper or on the local TV news or sometimes in the national news? Without giving it a lot of thought, the times that might come to mind are Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and Thanksgiving.

What are the things that make the news or get incorporated in the reporting by the media at Christmas? If we were from another planet and observed what was going on we would see, buying, giving and receiving gifts; arguments over Merry Christmas versus Happy Holidays; trees with decorations and flashing lights, Santa Claus and reindeer, evergreen branches and holly berries and Yule logs; travel to be with family; good food; providing food and gifts to the needy; and controversy over something called a manger scene. Which of these activities would we find the church and individual Christians involved?

The same question could be asked for what is commonly called Easter. The first thing associated with this event is a raucous celebration in February in which people get drunk, party, and get involved in lewd and questionable behaviors. This activity is followed (in the news) with some prominent people wearing a smudge of soot on their forehead for a day followed by a forty-day period of giving up something they shouldn't be doing in the first place. This is all a build-up to a lot of marketing and buying of eggs and chocolate rabbits and new clothes to wear to church the Sunday after the big Easter egg hunt that happened on the previous Saturday. This is also commemorated with travel and feasting and sunrise meetings by some local church groups to talk about crucifixion and resurrection. Which of these activities would we find the church and individual Christians involved?

Without even going into the Halloween and Thanksgiving emphases, we know there is involvement by the church and Christians with haunted houses, trunk-or-treating, football and black Friday. Do you think that the message of the church is diluted if not completely hidden by all the things with which we get involved? We can make the argument that we know the difference in the seasonal fairy tales and the truth of the gospel message. To a nonbeliever, the story of Jesus being God Incarnate sounds like a cleverly devised fairy tale. The accounts of angel appearing to people would be like the Easter rabbit bringing brightly colored eggs one time a year.

What was Peter's remedy to counteract this kind of skepticism? It was simply that he was there and he experienced it and was relating “what he had witnessed and knew.” Peter saw Jesus walk on water, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Peter was there on the Mount of Transfiguration and heard the voice of God, the Father. Peter was there when the vision and

message about clean versus unclean animals confirmed what God had been doing with the family Cornelius, the Roman centurion. He was not simply sharing an account of what someone else had told him. It is difficult to refute the account of someone who has been there and done that.

So, let's go back to the question regarding how we can apply the teaching that Peter has shared with us? Without over simplifying it, "we need to be relating what God has done in our lives through our trust in the Lord Jesus as we witness to others." If our testimony is only what we find in an evangelism pamphlet, then we are more likely to get the skepticism that Peter said that we need to avoid.

What can be more central and foundational to the gospel message other than the truth that Jesus is the Son of God? This was confirmed to reliable witnesses on two occasions and both involved a voice speaking from heaven. Peter also was a witness of the life events that involved teaching, miracles, and many other things that were in accurate fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Inspired Scripture – Written by God – 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. 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NASB95)

One translation or version says we have the "prophetic word made more sure" and another version says we have a "more sure word of prophecy." Of course, the implications of these two possible interpretations are somewhat different. Let's look at these possibilities separately to see what truths we can glean from going in either direction.

Starting with the first possibility, we could ask "what would need to happen to make the prophetic words that we read in Old Testament Scriptures more sure?" The first thing that we likely think about is that those prophecies have been and are being fulfilled. At the time Peter wrote these two letters, he had personally experienced and witnessed fulfilled prophecies in the life, work, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. All of those to whom he was writing were Christians and had experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit into their lives which was also prophesied. We could certainly agree that witnessing or experiencing the fulfillment of various Old Testament prophecies would give us great assurance regarding the validity of the entire body of prophecy.

Since we have such evidence of the validity of the OT prophecies, we do well to pay attention to and appreciate it as did David who wrote in Psalms 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" or as Peter writes "shining in a dark place." This "lamp" is said to be what we have up until a point in which something significant changes.

There are at least two possibilities of what this significant change is to which Peter referenced. Most commentators related the statement "the day dawns and the morning star arises" to the "day of Christ's return." According to *Barnes New Testament Notes*, he wrote "to that glorious time when the Savior shall return to receive his people to himself in that heaven where all shall be light." John Gill hints at this being when we are united with Christ during the 1000-year reign on earth.

Matthew Henry's Commentary has the following:

When the light of the scripture is darted into the blind mind and dark understanding by the Holy Spirit of God, then the spiritual day dawns and the day-star arises in that soul. This enlightening of a dark benighted mind is like the day-break that improves and advances, spreads and diffuses itself through the whole soul, till it makes perfect day. It is a growing knowledge; those who are this way enlightened never think they know enough, till they come to know as they are known. To give heed to this light must needs be the

interest and duty of all; and all who do truth come to this light, while evil-doers keep at a distance from it.

Prior to our conversion which resulted in the new birth and the indwelling presence of Christ by the Holy Spirit, the OT Scripture was the only light that was available to us. Now that we are in Christ and Christ is in (or has arisen in) our hearts, we should be able to see much more clearly. It would be like the difference in having to use an oil lamp in the middle of the night as compared to being able to see things after the sun has come up.

The second interpretation is that we have “a more sure word of prophecy.” This wording implies a comparison. Some have said that the comparison is that the OT Scriptures are more reliable than the pagan myths. Who would argue with that? Some commentators have said that even though Peter and the other Apostles had additional revelations of a prophetic nature pointing toward the Second Advent of Christ that the OT Scriptures were more reliable than what the Apostles had said about the subject. According to this interpretation, Peter was saying that even though three of them saw the transfiguration of Christ along with Moses and Elijah, we should not give that more credibility than the prophecies in the Old Testament. This seems to be a false comparison.

Prior to the advent of the Messiah, Israel was encouraged and admonished by the prophets and poets to obey the commandments and follow the precepts that had been given to them over the course of many centuries. Evidence abounds in the historical accounts of the nation of Israel that God held them accountable to trust and obey His word. With the coming of the Messiah and with the fulfillment (confirmation) of multiple prophecies and with the eyewitness accounts of all that Jesus did during His earthly ministry, we can be even more confident in God’s promises as well as being more diligent in obeying His precepts. The overwhelming abundance of evidence of confirmed prophecies gives clear testimony that the prophecies were from God and not just what some person thought. Since these prophecies were given by God, then we would be well advised to interpret them in light of the character of God and not twist them to mean some idea we might have.

The statement that Peter made regarding “private interpretation” of prophecies has been seen by some to apply to those who read the prophecies and some contend that Peter meant that the prophets themselves were not recording their personal private opinions. In the first case, we certainly do need the help of the Holy Spirit in understanding the full implications of Scriptural prophecies. In the second case regarding the prophets, who could argue against the idea that for a prophetic message to be valid and one that would be sure to be fulfilled that the Spirit of God would have to be the primary source?

Summary: Living with truth should, first of all, influence all our relationships with others. We need to know the foundational basis for the truth we have and be able to stand firm in our belief. Finally, we need to make sure that whatever we think is truth aligns with the absolute truth of God’s word.