

**2 Peter 1:16-21** To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” <sup>18</sup>We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

<sup>19</sup>We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup>since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Oh that we could have been there, on the Mount of Jesus’ transfiguration! Then we, like Peter, would have this threefold assurance when it comes to knowing Jesus is God’s Son. He had seen it. He’d heard it from God’s own voice. He had the word of the prophets inspired by God and fulfilled in Christ. No wonder Peter was able to be so bold in his faith. No wonder he was so zealous, so faithful, even to death.

Have you ever wished, or better, prayed for faith like the disciples’? Have you ever thought, “If only I had seen Jesus do what he did, if only I had been there, heard it, felt it, seen the results and the reactions to his power, then I could look out into the future and be unshaken by anything?”

And yet, as we look closely at this threefold assurance Peter had in his Savior, he didn’t throw out the Word of the prophets because of what he had seen or heard. Even though he had seen with his own eyes, and heard with his ears, those things didn’t dis-count what God had said in his Word. If anything, it made the Word all the more important and meaningful, even and especially to him. Look what he said: Not, “I have seen, I have heard, but *you* have the God’s Word. No. He said, “I have seen, I have heard, **We have the completely reliable prophetic word.**”

If Peter, an eyewitness to Jesus’ glory being confirmed by God’s own voice from within that cloud of God’s Majestic Glory, counted God’s Word as a much needed and equal assurance for his faith, how much more should we? And so Peter urges us, pleads with us, “Pay attention to it.”

We need such an encouragement, a reminder, sometimes a command to do so. Peter understood his readers were human beings with sinful natures that easily get distracted by the latest and greatest fad. And here in 2020 our sinful flesh has infinite amounts of things to be distracted by. Endless entertainment, continuously pumped into our lives via our tv’s, computers, tablets, and phones. Constant opportunities to escape reality one episode at a time. All the things families are involved in today, sports, groups, events. And then the news, news, and more news. And also social media, where before we had to wait to talk to someone, or pay long distance, connecting with people around the world has become so easy. And none of these things are bad things in and of themselves, but even the secular world recognizes it can be too much of a good thing, with encouragements to limit the organized sports and some phones now having “screen time” monitors that keep track of how many hours a day you are on your screen.

Quiet moments where we can sit at our Savior’s feet, listening to the words of our God are fewer and farther between, certainly than in Peter’s day, but even up to just a few years ago. Our days are so full, we’re so busy. But then again, it’s ok, right? We’ve seen it before, we’ve heard it all already. We’re good.

Those words can be spoken about many things, everything really — been there, done that — *except* when it comes to the Word. Peter shows us why: **You do well to pay attention to it, since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

*This is God’s Word!* It’s not a work of fiction. It’s not a take it or leave it kind of deal, seen it once and I’m good. Just think about it: is hours and hours on a screen really more important than a few moments in the words of our God? Going to the lake? Going out, sleeping in, staying home, my time to do my things? “Of course not,” we would say, but it’s not always what our actions and attitudes show.

Someone might say, “Not me! I’m in the Word all the time.” And your sinful flesh is there every second telling you it’s not important, whispering in your ear that it’s a waste of time, always looking for the opportunity to distract you away from it.

Peter isn’t trying to steer us away from the things we enjoy doing. But at the same time he is reminding us to “Pay attention to the Word.” To make sure it always has a place in our lives. Because the devil and our sinful

flesh aren't trying to steer us away from the Word only because, well, there are better and more exciting and entertaining things it would rather do, but because of the message of the gospel it absolutely hates and doesn't want us to hear. Because here in this building, here in these words we hear of our forgiveness God has procured for us for all our sins by sending his Son. Even for the times when we have lost our focus and ignored his Word. Jesus came to our world, lived, suffered, died, and rose again all for you and me, to save us from a fate so unimaginable and indescribable and unending — God not paying attention to us, separated from him in the fires of hell. It's that message of saving deliverance that strengthens our faith and keeps us coming back, all the more reason why the devil and our sinful flesh don't want us to pay attention to it. All the more reason we should!

Which brings us to Peter's second reason to pay attention to the Word. Not only is it God's Word, but it's Jesus' way into our hearts.

**You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts,**

How do you know who Jesus is? How does any believer come to that truth? It's not from seeing Jesus appear to us in dazzling splendor. It's not from God the Father's voice booming from the heavens or from within a cloud of his Majestic Glory. It's by the Holy Spirit working through his Word.

Peter said it is **like a lamp shining into a dark place**. There is no place darker than the heart of a sinful human being. There we find **only evil all the time**. A place where God's Word, his promises are foolishness. Where God is the enemy. Only by the Holy Spirit's power, through his Word, the light of the Gospel pierces that darkness. For most of us that day was the day we were baptized - through water and the Word the Holy Spirit brought us to faith in Jesus as our Savior. For some it was a moment later in life when you heard the Gospel and by the Spirit's power, believed it.

At first it was a glimmer — Jesus loves me this I know.

Then a little brighter — Jesus died for the sins of the world

And brighter still — Jesus died for me

And still brighter — I know Jesus is Savior and what he did for me, and what it means for me as I live my life — out of thanks to him.

Brighter still — I trust him. I trust God's promises. I trust God's plan for me.

Our connection to the Word is our connection to Christ — as he rises in our hearts higher and higher, making Peter's words to us today all the more important — Pay attention to it!

What clouds are brewing in your life that the devil and your sinful flesh will use to obscure Christ's light in your life? What doubts will they create? You can be sure they will. You can bet they are already today, working against Christ rising in your hearts.

**We have the completely reliable prophetic word. [We] do well to pay attention to it.** No matter how dark the clouds on the horizon are, no matter how dark the cloud seems to be over your head, Christ is brighter. Peter, James, and John saw that literally on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before them. But we see it spiritually every time we see him on the pages of Scripture. What he has done for you as he lived his perfect life, what he has secured for you when he died on the cross, what he has guaranteed to you by rising from the dead, gives you the brightness of his eternal light, shining into eternity. Your sins are forgiven, the devil can't touch you. You have new life in Christ before God, your sinful flesh has been crucified with Christ. You have eternal life waiting for you, the world and all it's evil around will one day be gone. But you will live on in the glory of your Savior, in the presence of your God, in the certain hope of the faith you have today.

Have you ever thought, "If only I had seen Jesus do what he had done, if only I had been there, I could look out into the future and be unshaken by anything. We can, because we have the Word — the reliable prophetic words of our God. We can look out over the season of Lent, stretching over the next 6 weeks. We have the opportunity to come on Wednesday nights and pay attention to the heart of what our Savior has done for us — as we read a portion of his passion each night. As we hear all that he did, all that he suffered — beaten, bloodied, and put to death — we can do so and not be shaken. We have the words of the prophets that have told us how this would be. We have the words of our God that tell us why this had to be — for us and our salvation. So we can look to the next 6 weeks and beyond, to whatever the future holds, with the faith of the disciples, as we pay attention to the words of our God, as the light of Christ in our hearts grows brighter still. Amen.

