

2 Peter 1:16-21

“A More Certain Word”

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Introduction: Credibility Crisis

There's a constant credibility crisis that's going on. A jockeying for truth and who you can trust to portray truth to us in this world. I wonder if you can think of a couple of the fears of this credibility crisis we see in our culture and this world today. Who can you trust about medical advice? Who can you trust regarding what has truly happened in certain events around the world? Who can we trust that would have credibility to tell us how we ought to live our lives; what expectations we can have for what we would do in this world? Can we trust our bosses and the contracts that we have signed at work as credible sources to follow through on the promises that they have made on certain things? In some contexts, “No!” There's a constant credibility crisis as well of who can we trust to tell us about the problems that ail is in society? Is the solution to the difficulties that we face in this world merely a lack of education? Thinking about nature and nurture; are those the explanations for what's wrong in this world? Who can we trust to think well about who we are? What a human being is? Who can we trust about telling us the difference between men and women; about the difference between an adult and a child? Who can we trust about anything that we would do?

I know that there are discount retailers on the internet; I won't name any of them, you can fill in the blank if you'd like. Knock-off lego brands, toy brands and things like that. I'm in a camping group on a social media platform and I found it funny that one person had ordered a tent one time from one of these discount retailers. It was in the shape of a six person tent. When they received it, it was about the size of something that they could set on their table. There's a credibility crisis; can you trust that the product that they're advertising to you is actually the thing that you're going to get? Well, I'll let you spin that out into every application you can think of with the credibility crises that we face in the world.

Ultimately, when it comes to the Christian faith and what we're thinking about this morning is that we face a credibility crisis. Who can we trust to tell us the truth about God? Who can we trust to tell us the truth about ourselves? Who can we trust to tell us the truth about what we need in order to overcome the greatest threat that lies against us; the judgment of God that is coming for our sin against Him? We look to God's Word. That's what we'll see the Apostle Peter arguing from **2 Peter 1:16-21**: “*A More Certain Word*.”

Context:

As you turn there here's some context. Peter has taught in **verses 1-13** that the Christian life is rooted in knowledge that bears the fruit in faithful lives. He argues we need constant reminders of both the doctrine and the life that the Christian faith produces—that the gospel produces within people. That sets the stage for the ultimate reminder that we constantly need in our text today: *The centrality of God's prophetic Word*. Please listen as I read **2 Peter 1:16-21**:

2 Peter 1:16-21

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 [Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*], 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 the prophetic word more fully confirmed, 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.

This is God's authoritative, inerrant, infallible and good Word, and I pray God write it's eternal truth upon each of our hearts. As we consider this text I have four points: **(1) Eyewitnesses of His Majesty: The Apostles** (2 Peter 1:16); **(2) The Most Important Testimony: God** (2 Peter 1:17-18); **(3) Prophetic Word More Fully Confirmed** (2 Peter 1:19); and **(4) How Scripture Works** (2 Peter 1:20-21). The solution to the credibility crisis of who God is, who we are and what we most need in this life comes from God's Holy Word.

Verse 15 is the launchpad of our text. We're beginning this morning at **verse 16**, but you see that connecting word at the beginning of **verse 16**, “For,” meaning that this is coming out of what has come before. So now, look at what came before in **verse 15**: “And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.” Last week I argued that the “*these things*” here refers to everything he's written about in at least eight doctrinal headings. The doctrines of **(1) Jesus Christ** (1:1-2), **(2) the Trinity** (1:2), **(3) our sin/our depravity** (1:1), **(4) justification through Christ's imputed righteousness alone** (1:1) and this is all in just **verses 1-2**. **(5) God's continual grace and peace to believers** (1:2), **(6) effectual calling** (1:3-4, 10) and **(7) God's sovereign election** (1:10-11). All of these then bear the fruit of the eighth doctrinal heading that we see in the text: **(8) Sanctification** (1:12-15) in the virtues that we use to work out our calling and election. Supplementing our faith with the seven qualities of **(a) virtue**, **(b) knowledge**, **(c) self-control**, **(d) steadfastness**, **(e) godliness**, **(f) brotherly affection**, and **(g) love**. These are the truths believers are established in (v. 12), and Peter feels the weight of reminding them of these things before he dies (vv. 13-15). Our text this morning is flowing out of that.

1. Eyewitnesses of His Majesty: The Apostles (2 Peter 1:16)

Look at **verse 16** again, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths...” What is the ground of these eight doctrinal headings that we've thought about in these last weeks from 2 Peter 1? What makes these things credible? Why can we rely on these things? Why must we demand these things in order to have a right understanding of the gospel; a right understanding of what it means to be a Christian; and a right understanding of what it means to walk in repentance and faith? Not only do believers need to know what the Christian faith is, but they need to know the reasons for why they believe it. The reasons we believe in the gospel; it's not rooted in my own individual opinion or my subjective preferences. No, this is important especially because of the constant threat of false teachers (2:1-3). The Christian faith has credible and reasonable grounds. The Christian faith isn't belief against all evidence. Ours is a faith that believes because of the evidence. Friends, as Christians we don't have a crisis of credibility like everyone else in the world does as it tries to establish truth and stability in life based off of grounds that cannot be confirmed as coming from some authoritative source. God wants our faith—as a Christian... You, as a believer—to be established on credible and reasonable evidence so that we would have

stability in our lives.

God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, “Come now, let us *reason* together, says the Lord” (Isa. 1:18). The Apostle Paul wrote, “Each one should be fully *convinced in his own mind*” (Rom. 14:5), and, “Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we *persuade* others” (2 Cor. 5:11). Paul’s arguments are so strong that the Gentile client-king Agrippa asked, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” (Acts 26:28). The Christian faith commends itself based off of evidence, commends itself based off reliable truth. It’s reasonable. It’s credible. The prophetic and apostolic method wasn’t only to confront, but to persuade and to convince with a message from a reasonable God. And while we confront and are firm in truths we share that are difficult for others to hear—even impossible for those who have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit to hear—God’s Word commends approaching our hearers with respect, grace, sweetness and even softness. **Proverbs 15:1-2**, “A *soft answer* turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.” **Proverbs 16:21**, “...*sweetness of speech* increases persuasiveness.” **Colossians 1:5-6**, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be *gracious, seasoned with salt*, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” And as Peter wrote in his first letter, **1 Peter 3:15-16**, “...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to *make a defense* to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with *gentleness* and *respect*, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.” Likewise, Peter reasons with believers here: “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths...” He’s not bashing them over the head for their stupidity of holding to certain things; that they are being tempted toward walking into myths that people are adding and rumors, old wives tales (Cf. 1 Tim. 4:7) that are being passed around in the life of a church. No, he appeals to their reasonableness. He respects them. He’s being gracious to them: “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths.” He doesn’t say, “Christians you should have this figured out by now, you idiots.” No!

Why should we listen to what the Apostle Peter has to say here? Look at **verse 16** again, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming/parousia¹ of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” We didn’t make this up. People can kill us. People can persecute us. People can say all kinds of things against us. They can do anything to us, but we did not make this up. We, the Apostles, are eyewitnesses. We’ll come back to the phrase again, “the power and coming—or return—of our Lord Jesus Christ,” in a minute. For now though, why should we listen to anything from Peter or any of the Apostles? They didn’t make it up. The Christian faith isn’t rooted in cleverly devised [σεσοφισμένοις] myths [μύθοις]. *Muthois* can be translated here—myth—as “stories”, “tales”, or “fables”. Myths are things that the Apostles intentionally and firmly opposed. **1 Timothy 1:3-4**, “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to *myths* and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.” **1 Timothy 4:7**, “Have nothing to do with irreverent, *silly myths*.” **Titus 1:13b-14**, “...rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to *Jewish myths* and

¹ παρουσίαν from παρουσία.

the commands of people who turn away from the truth.” Brothers and sisters, be careful about speculating on things that aren’t plain in Scripture. This is one of the main concerns I have for shows like *The Chosen* or movies like the *Passion of the Christ*. It’s not merely images that might be replayed in a worship service someplace that is clearly forbidden from Scripture. They blend truth with speculation and myths that are not in Scripture, which promote speculations rather than the Apostolic Word. I’ve had conversations before with Muslim friends who grew up hearing myths about Jesus from the Qur’an and seeing those myths about Jesus on television growing up in Central Asia that aren’t clearly in Scripture. In conversations I’ve had these were stumbling blocks to the rock solid credibility and reasonableness of Scripture. We need to be careful that we don’t mix the rock-solid truth of Apostolic eye-witness testimony in Scripture with myths that men spin under the caveat of “artistic license”. We need to be careful about that. I have to admit that if you watch those shows it tugs the heart strings. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ it might even make you cry. That was my experience. I’ve only watched one episode, I would not recommend it. Just because it’s done with good acting, using good modern cinematic special effects in the context of “evangelicalism” in the modern day and that the dvd’s are sold at Hobby Lobby, it doesn’t justify it any more than the myths of Gnosticism or Islam.

The only thing we need to be convinced of the gospel and the Apostolic teaching which is the stewardship from God that is by faith (1 Tim. 1:4), the testimony of the eye-witnesses of Jesus Christ. We don’t need Passion Plays like they used in the Middle Ages. We don’t need dramatic reenactments. We don’t need these things. We don’t need gnostic so-called “gospels”. We need to be reminded of this again and again about the credible evidence in the eye-witnesses of Christ and as Paul write, that we may learn by the Apostles, “not to go beyond what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6). We need to be careful about this.

2. The Most Important Testimony: God (2 Peter 1:17-18)

Who has the most important testimony that these things are truth? Is it the Apostles? No, it’s God. It’s God’s testimony to the truthfulness of Christ. He’s the one who gave the prophetic Word in the Old Testament. He’s the one who sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, as the great fulfillment of the Great Prophet in **Deuteronomy 18:15-22**. And even as He gave testimony by an audible voice at the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. It’s God and His testimony of what is true. There is no credibility crisis when we have the one who is sinless, who is perfect, who is rooted in truth, indeed who establishes what truth is, who is the definition of truth. They saw Jesus’s majesty [μεγαλειότητος]—magnificence, mighty power and greatness. And the majesty they saw is the reason why we should trust what the Apostles taught. But God is the one who bore witness and testimony that Christ is true that they then taught. That brings us back to that phrase in **verse 16**: “the power and coming (or return) of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Speculation and myths erode credibility, not only the “what” of what actually happened historically in Jesus’s life and ministry, but also the “why” or the meaning and significance of what happened, and then also it erodes the “what” of what will happen historically in the future. The spiritual significance of the gospel of Jesus Christ—forgiveness for sin, regeneration, effectual calling, justification, salvation, glorification—the significance of what the gospel of Jesus Christ has accomplished and the future of historical events—Christ’s return and final judgement—all rest upon the credibility of what happened in the past. And the one who has

authoritative witness and testimony to what happened: God. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus rose again from the dead three days later. Amen! That is historically true! Even Atheists will confirm that's an historical fact, even if many of them will say, "Well, that's at least what Christians have always taught all the way back." But these are historically true things, facts of what happened. When we add myths to this we begin to (unintentionally probably) erode the credibility of that in the hearts and minds of our hearers; the people that we're trying to share this with. But Jesus's death and resurrection is not just an interesting historical fact. It accomplished something and it guarantees future historical events that will surely and certainly happen. He died and rose for a reason: ***God's glory in the salvation of sinners.***

But more than this, Jesus died and rose again to us give a solid foundation for what Jesus taught about the future. The "power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" in **verse 16** refers not merely to his incarnation—suffering, death, resurrection and ascension—but of the apostolic teaching of Jesus Christ's final return, "the ***coming*** of our Lord Jesus Christ," or "return" there in the text. The ***parousia*** is the longing of Christians, the longing of the church, "Come, Lord Jesus." The coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to judge on the last day. To save His people eternally into His kingdom and to righteously judge those who have rejected him into God's eternal torments justly in hell. When Jesus returns the dead will be raised and He will judge the living and the dead. In making a defense of the final resurrection Paul gives three proofs from creation about God's ability to raise the dead with glorified bodies in **1 Corinthians 15**—(1) dead seeds grow into plants, (2) different kinds of flesh in animal life, and (3) different glory of the Sun, moon and stars. But friends, we don't need apologetic proofs to have a well-founded, credible and reasonable belief in the final coming of Christ and a final resurrection. We need only trust the eye-witness testimony of the Apostles as they heard God give authoritative testimony to Christ. Knowing the historical truth of Jesus's life, death and resurrection establishes a credible belief in the meaning and significance of it for our lives today both spiritually, but also what we can expect for the future: Jesus is coming, He is coming again. His return is imminent. We don't know they day and nobody knows the hour.

Look at **verses 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,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain." Peter is describing the true historical event of Jesus's Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). Listen to **Matthew 17:1-3**, "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him." Now in **17:5-8**, "He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.' And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only." Peter, James and John heard God the Father's voice speak, "This is my beloved Son, with whom, I am well pleased." There is no credibility crisis for the Christian faith, because the one who has ultimate credibility is the one who has borne testimony to the truthfulness of Jesus Christ. Listen to **2 Peter 1:18** again, "we ourselves heard this very voice

borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.” There is a true testimony that is more important than even the Apostles. The Apostles testimony is true, it’s reliable, it’s God’s very Word. And we see that the Apostle Peter is making that case here (1 Peter 1:16). But it’s only reliable, it’s only God’s Word that carries authority with it because it has been confirmed by God the Father himself about Jesus Christ, his one and only begotten Son. The credibility of the the New Testament doesn’t ultimately rest in trustworthy men, but on a trustworthy God. The Apostle Paul even takes this to the point in **Galatians 1:8**, “if we... if an apostle comes... even an apostle comes and preaches a different gospel than the one that you have heard from us, let him be damned, let him be accursed, anathema [ἀνάθεμα].”² Paul says something similar in 2 Corinthians 13:6 where false teachers are charging the Apostle Paul of teaching something unfaithful and then justifying the lack of godliness in the life of Christians. He says, “even if we as the Apostles have failed,” that doesn’t excuse you to not live for Christ. The Word of God does not depend on the witness or credibility of men, but on the credibility of the witness of God the Father about His one and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

I think it’s interesting that the Apostle Peter leaves off in **1 Peter** the last thing God the Father says at the transfiguration about Jesus, “listen to Him.” Why should anybody listen to Jesus? Because He, Jesus, is the prophetic Word of God more fully confirmed. Peter doesn’t need to say it here, because that’s Peter’s point: “Listen to Jesus.” As we teach what He taught us... we have listened to him, now we are writing what he said. So now, listen to Jesus by listening to us. Peter and the Apostles listened to God the Father, the listened to His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, and now they are writing what they saw and heard, so that through him (Peter) and the other Apostles we are now able to see what they saw and listen to what they listened to. How can we have assurance that we are hearing God speak? It seems like every other person in our culture within evangelicalism is saying, “God spoke to me... I was doing this the other day and God said to me, God revealed to me, God spoke to me.” Friends, that chips away at the credibility of the Word of God that we have received; God the Father giving testimony to the Son that the Apostles are carrying forward to us in this text. Jesus Christ who taught and proved that He is true God and true man is the foundation of any credible profession of faith and any credible teaching about how we can be saved. How can we hear Jesus speak? Through the eye-witnesses. We can’t go on our dreams, visions and we must not go to impressions. We don’t look for signs and circumstances: “Maybe because this happened over here, that’s a sign, from God.” That’s not the authoritative Word of God. That’s just speculation and a myth. We don’t look for signs in our circumstances, we don’t claim that we are hearing the plain and clear voice of God speaking to us today in any other source than the Holy Word of God in the Bible. We can’t go to our intuition. We need the testimony of the one true and living God about who Jesus Christ is if we would have any true assurance about who God is and what He demands of us. There’s no authority in popes, there’s no authority in claims at apostolic succession whether in Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy or High Church Anglicanism. There is authority from only one place: God Himself as He has given testimony to Jesus Christ that we have received through the eye-witnesses of the Apostles.

We don’t see any authority in a particular institution of a local church that has made

² Paul plainly means “apostles” by writing “we” in Galatians 1:8 and it’s also implied in “anyone” in Galatians 1:9.

God's Word. No, God makes His people by His Word. God is always the one who has the credibility and authority to establish what is true. There's no authority in charismatic teachers. There's no authority in social media influencers or podcasters that can establish a firm foundation for your faith. As we'll sing in a few minutes in *How Firm a Foundation*: "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in God's excellent Word! (Alone!) What more can be said than to you God hath said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?" You might say, "Well, that's really funny that you would say that, Noah. Because you're in a church that has a *Statement of Faith*. You're teaching in Sunday school every week this thing called the, *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*. You like things like the *Baptist Catechism* and the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*." Friends, these are just summaries of what the Scriptures teach. We're not going off the opinions of men. We're just looking at what Christians have always believed and put down so that we might understand what the Word of God says. If there's anything in any Statement of Faith, Confession or Creed that would conflict with the Scriptures it either needs to be reformed or the whole thing just thrown away. So friends, again that's not a grounds to turn away from trying to make the Christian faith clear through Confessions of Faith or anything like that. No, but we write these knowing that God alone has the authority to confirm truth. That His testimony is the one that really matters, and that's found in God's Word alone.

3. We Have the Prophetic Word More Fully Confirmed (2 Peter 1:19)

Peter establishes the trustworthiness of the Christian faith on the testimony of God (point two from verses 17-18 above) that we hear through the testimony of the eye-witnesses, the Apostles (point one from verse 16 above). He underscores this in verse 19, "And we," the Apostles, the apostolic "we," "have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you (y'all)³ 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." There's a little bit of a foreshadow every day when the Sun comes up. The light of the Sun reflects off a particular celestial body, the "morning star" (Venus), that gives testimony to the certain fact that the Sun is going to be rising in a little bit.⁴ That's the terminology here, "the morning star rises, the day dawns." Again this is thinking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, looking forward to what God's Word has promised not merely about what happened in the past that it's historically true. Not only the significance of the the past for salvation through Jesus Christ, but particularly the coming of the end—"the day dawns"—when the last day comes. Again

Again, in the text "we" is the Apostles, and the "you all" or "ya'll's" are the believers he's writing to and to us as believers today through them. The Apostles have the prophetic word

³ Second Person Plural.

⁴ Lucas, Dick and Green, Christopher *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 82-83. "The *morning star* is Venus, which catches the sun's rays just before dawn and is a promise of daytime. It reflects yet another Old Testament picture: 'A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.' That was regarded by Jewish teachers of Peter's time as a promise of the coming Messiah, and the Christians naturally took it up gladly and applied it to Jesus and his second coming (Luke 1:78-79; Rev. 2:28; 22:16). But Peter says that the morning star rises in our *hearts*. Some older schools too the phrases to mean that the light shining in the darkness is the Old Testament period, the day dawning is the preaching of the gospel, and the morning star rising in our hearts is conversion. But that view founders on Peter's use of 'day' to mean the second coming (3:10). Instead, we should probably understand him to say that the return of Christ will marry the objective promises of God with our subjective belief in them. As Paul said, 'then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.' Until that day, we have to believe with our hearts despite the evidence of our eyes, and the Old Testament remains the permanently valid voice of God until the end of human history."

more fully confirmed.⁵ **(1)** Some think that prophetic Word more fully confirmed here simply means the Old Testament.⁶ **(2)** Others think the prophetic Word more fully confirmed is the voice of God the Father at the transfiguration.⁷ **(3)** Some some think prophetic Word is Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.⁸ While all of these are the prophetic Word of God, there's something unique in the fact that "we"—the Apostles here—have it more fully confirmed. Some commentators write, "He [Peter] is not replacing the Old Testament with his experience, for chapter 2 depends on the Old Testament; but neither is he putting the Old Testament in a different league from his experience, which would undermine his whole case that it was God who spoke on the hilltop. Rather, he is saying that God has spoken again, confirming what he said before and giving a partial fulfillment of it, increasing Peter's expectation of the next stage in God's plan. He had seen how the prophets had spoken not just about a glorious king, but about a suffering king; and, as a witness to the suffering, he had become even more certain about the glory."⁹ Again that word "coming" in **verse 16** the "future coming", the "return", the "parousia" [παρουσία] of Jesus Christ; the expectation that Christians have of Jesus coming on when last day dawns (vers 19). Peter's experience as an eye-witness is important, but there is something more important than his experience, the prophetic Word of the Old Testament, fulfilled in God's voice about Jesus Christ and what He—Jesus—taught about the past, present and future. Another commentator writes, "As reliable and helpful as Peter's experience was, the prophetic word of Scripture is more sure. Throughout redemptive history, God Himself has repeatedly emphasized that His inspired Word is inerrant, infallible, and the all-sufficient source of truth, which does not require human confirmation."¹⁰ Scripture is more reliable than experience. And even as the Apostle Peter is saying, "We experienced this," he's saying there is a more sure word than even our experiences. He's writing with post-Resurrection and post-Pentecost clarity (cf. John 14:26).

⁵ Some think "prophetic word more fully confirmed" here only refers to the Old Testament. Other's think it refers to what the Apostle's witnessed in the actual life of Jesus Christ like the transfiguration. Other's think it's the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the life of Jesus Christ. And others think "prophetic word more fully confirmed" refers to what the Peter and the Apostles are writing in the New Testament with the post-resurrection and post-Pentecost clarity. This may sound simplistic, but I think the

⁶ Henry, Matthew *Commentary on Acts to Revelation*, Vol. 6 (Peabody: Hendricksen Publishers, 2006), 840-841. "The description that is given of the scriptures of the Old Testament: they are called a *more sure word of prophecy*." He follows with this nuance, "Now the accomplishment of the Old Testament by the New, and the agreeableness of the New Testament to the Old, are a full demonstration of the truth of both. Read the Old Testament as a prophecy of Christ, and with diligence and thankfulness use the New as the best exposition of the Old... All the prophecies of the Old Testament are more sure and certain to us who have the history of the most exact and minute accomplishment of them." This said, it seems he believes "more sure word of prophecy" refers particularly to the Old Testament.

⁷ Poole, Matthew *Commentary on Matthew to Revelation*, Vol. 3 (Peabody: Hendricksen Publishers, 2010), 920-921. "With the voice from heaven, than which he calls the word of prophecy more firm or sure, not in respect of truth, (which was equal in both), but in respect of the manner of its revelation." But he also gives a second option of the Old Testament similar to Matthew Henry, "the testimony of Peter and the other two apostles concerning that voice which came to Christ, than which testimony the word of prophecy is said to be more sure."

⁸ Gill, John *Exposition of the Old & New Testaments, Galatians to Revelation*, Vol. 9 (Paris: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989), 603. "This word of prophecy is generally understood of the writings and prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ." He continues, "The truth of the matter is, that this word of prophecy is not to be understood of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament; for though these are the word of God, and do testify of Christ, and are to be taken heed, and attended to, as proofs and evidence of Gospel truths, and are a light to direct and guide in matters both of faith and practice, yet they are not the only light, and are far from being the clearest, and what are only to be attended to; for the Gospel that came by Christ, and is preached by his apostles, and is contained in the writings of the New Testament, is a much clearer light, and at least equally to be attended to... Now this prophecy or prediction, concerning Christ's coming again with power and great glory, was a surer evidence of it than what the apostles saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears upon the mount; nothing was surer to them, nor could anything make it surer to them, that he was honoured and glorified, than what they saw and heard: but then this did not so certainly prove that he would hereafter be glorified, or come again in glory."

⁹ Lucas, Dick and Green, Christopher *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 81-82.

¹⁰ MacArthur, John *2 Peter & Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 61-62.

The prophetic Word of God—of everything that God had revealed about the coming of the Christ, the coming of the Messiah, the one who would be the King, the chosen seed of Adam, of Abraham, of David has been confirmed in Jesus Christ. Surely the “prophetic word” here has a sense of the Old Testament in that sense, but it’s more clear in the life of Jesus Christ. And then also now as after Pentecost the Holy Spirit has come into the hearts of the Apostles and now they preach the significance of what God has accomplished with the authority of God’s Word to the churches and to unbelievers throughout their region and around the world. But you see here that he’s claiming that Scripture is more reliable than an experience. The prophetic Word that God the Father gave in the Old Testament confirmed by His vocal declaration at Jesus’s transfiguration, and that now Peter and the Apostles—including the Apostle Paul that he mentions writes Scripture in **chapter 3** of this letter (2 Peter 3:16)—what they are teaching is more sure than experiences. Brothers and sisters, there is no credibility crisis in Christianity, because God has given us eye-witnesses who truly saw these things, but it wasn’t their experiences that confirms these things as truth, but it was God’s testimony about Christ that confirms it to be true. And then through Christ, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, empowers the Apostles in the New Covenant church to preach to all nations and make the prophetic Word more sure to us as it becomes part of Holy Scripture.

Brothers and sisters, what type of words do we hang our lives upon? Who do we go to for credibility when it comes to the things of God; that we can truly have an assurance that our sins are forgiven; that we can truly believe what the Apostles taught that there is a final day coming in accordance with the Scriptures? How can we have a credible source to trust that what they said about Jesus’s final return is actually going to happen? We preach about the resurrection every Sunday, we don’t have to wait for one holiday a year like Easter. No, we celebrate and preach the resurrection every single Lord’s Day when we gather as a church. On the first day of the week Jesus got up from the grave on that day. But I remember one time as I was preaching about the resurrection a visitor met me at the door and he said, “I have never heard of this before.” I asked him, “have you ever been to a church.” He said, “I grew up going to church every single week, but I’d never heard about a resurrection. I’ve never heard about the resurrected body. I’ve never heard about our resurrection on the last day. I’ve heard about Jesus’s resurrection, but I’ve never heard about our resurrection.” I remember talking with him about that, and it was a real road block to him. He said, “I don’t know if that’s true.” So we read some Scripture we talked a little more about it. He said, “I don’t know if I can believe that.” Friends, there are people that claim to be Christians, even who have gone to church for many years, that may not have ever heard of the future coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection as the last day dawns. Somehow people can miss this doctrine. And when they hear it they say, “That sounds outlandish. I don’t know if that’s credible.” Friends, if God created the heavens and the earth just by speaking; if he raised Jesus from the dead it is not outlandish to believe in the promise of the coming of Christ, the final day dawning, the final resurrection and final judgment. As a matter of fact these things are established through God’s creation and Jesus’s resurrection from the dead. Friends, even as we read through this and we see that a credible profession of faith and true doctrine is through the witness and testimony of God, we have a more sure word about the coming (return/parousia) of Jesus Christ and the dawning of the final day. We have no doubt that it’s coming. And for those who have a saving interest in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, when that day dawns and

Judgement comes with the coming of Jesus we know that we will be brought safely through it into His eternal kingdom. Again, we have no credibility crisis when it comes to these things. We have a more sure word!

4. How Scripture Works (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Look at **verse 20**, “Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.” A prophecy of Scripture whether it be in the Old Testament or whether it would be confirming that Jesus is who he said he is, and the Apostles teaching what Jesus taught about the Christ's final coming and the final day dawning on the last day—the final resurrection, and God's judgment—no prophecy comes from someone's own interpretation. Look at **verse 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.”

A non-Christian would often respond to this, “That doesn't sound very reasonable... That doesn't sound very credible. That you would believe that the Holy Spirit of God can carry men along and produce a prophecy, and that without any need or dependence upon the man to do it?” Friends, this is completely reasonable. It's completely credible. Because if you have any knowledge of who we are as human beings a sinners you would understand why this is by necessity. Just look through the corridors of history at all the things that we have gotten wrong. Oh, so you're going to trust Immanuel Kant? You're going to trust Nietzsche? You're going to trust President Biden or President Trump? Pick your philosopher that people have tried to trust and the philosophy has utterly failed them and led to misery and despairing. How Scripture works... the only way that it can work is if it's from God and not the opinions of man. And praise God for it. If the credibility of the gospel and the hope of the final resurrection and God's final judgment to come rested upon human opinion, I don't think that we would come to these conclusions at all. We would have no hope of salvation. No hope of a saving interest in the righteousness of Jesus Christ that he applies freely to all of those who trust in him: “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God...” God willed that His Word would be known. Praise God for that. That should color how we think about the character of God. We can't produce the authority and the credibility of the Word of God by our opinions, but God wants to be known as glorious. God wants to be known as merciful. He wants to be known as gracious as he truly is. And friends, He is gracious that He has not wiped all of us out already because of our sins. He is long-suffering. He is patient with us; giving time for repentance. That would not be how the will of men would execute justice. But look at how the will of men executes justice in this world so often by misfiring. Overreactions. Underreactions. Not holding wickedness to account. Seeing injustice go unpunished in this world. Friends, God is perfectly good and right in His Word that He has revealed. He is gracious in His Word.

And God is kind to reveal Himself by carrying men by the power of His Holy Spirit to give us His Word in the prophets and the Apostles (Eph. 2:20). The foundation of the church is built upon the foundation of the teaching of the prophets and apostles, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. We thought about this last week. Are there Apostles today? No, there are not in a physical sense. But yes, there are Apostles today in an inscripturated sense. We still have the teaching of the Apostles in the Bible. Yes, it's an English translation here, but friends it's based off of the original languages that we see tested against manuscripts that we might have a reliable

translation of God's Word that we can understand it and teach it and live by it even today. How Scripture works is not that men made the Bible; that's the claim of the Roman Catholic Church—that the church made the Bible. Friends, no. It's never been that way. God always makes His people by His Word that He alone gives. Whether it's in the beginning God spoke; He can breath life into dust that should've just blown away but it materialized into our first father Adam. Whether it's in Ezekiel 37 where Ezekiel speaks God's Word into the valley of the dry bones and you get this awesome picture in your mind from the Word of bones that are dry in the middle of a desert rattling together and then sinews, the tendons and everything coming together and then the skin over-weaving that and then up stands the mighty army of God. Did the army make God's Word? Really. Did people make God's Word? Did Adam and Eve make God's Word that they could then be created by? No, no, no... God always makes His people by His Word. Yes, God confirms His Word through the apostolic witness in the Bible, but then through the ages the church has always affirmed what is truly understood and acceptable as God's authoritative Word in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments in the Bible. And this is how Scripture works. It's not written by the will of men, but by the will of God. No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

A number of years ago we were going through the doctrines of grace and particularly the doctrine of irresistible grace and how God's people cannot resist God's calling of His people to Himself by His grace. We thought a couple of weeks ago about these seven qualities to add to our faith (2 Peter 1:5-8) that sanctification is also irresistible, Christians want to grow in holiness. We don't always do it well. We fail in sanctification many times, but we desire to grow in holiness and godliness for the glory of God. Well here we see another kind of irresistible work of God. His Apostles can't do anything but teach what God has spoken to them. He "carries" them along. Some say, "Well, but Paul wrote the letters he wrote," or, "Peter wrote this letter, it wasn't God who wrote it." Paul and Peter are merely little "a" authors. The capital "A" author of every single book of the Bible is the one true and living Almighty God. He is the one who carried along these men, and it's reasonable to us. Again, there is no credibility crisis for the Christian faith, because we know that we could not give ourselves God's Word by our opinions or our will. God must do that alone.

Conclusion: No Credibility Crisis for the Christian Faith

Friends, as we think about these points from this passage: **(1) Eyewitnesses of His Majesty: The Apostles** (2 Peter 1:16); **(2) The Most Important Testimony: God's Testimony of Christ** (2 Peter 1:17-18); **(3) Prophetic Word More Fully Confirmed** (2 Peter 1:19); and **(4) How Scripture Works** (2 Peter 1:20-21). Friend, I hope that even this morning that God might encourage you that we have a firm foundation that we stand upon in the Bible—God's Holy Word. That we should have assurance, because God has spoken it; not men. And that we test ultimately every teaching we hear by God's Word; not my opinion, not by the opinions of really interesting people that would speak on the internet or some conference speaking circuit. Friends, there is no credibility crisis because God has guaranteed that through the writings of the Apostles and the prophets that we would know His Word. Knowing that, cherish your Bible! Read it. Meditate on it. In our families read the Bible more; talk about the Bible more; apply the Bible more. And if you're kids growing

up in a Christian home, growing up in a church, and perhaps going to a Christian school you're probably hearing the Bible referred to quite a bit. At least referred to, maybe not read. Well, always go and test what you're hearing by what you read in the Bible. Talk with your parents about what you're learning as well. There are certain assumptions that people will make sometimes in the culture and start saying things about Jesus, about doctrine, about the Bible without ever actually reading the Bible for itself and then we end up building our Christian faith off of falsehoods. May that not be said of us. Cherish the Bible, read it. If you don't understand it just keep reading it. Interpret the unclear in light of the clear. Seek to understand God's Word on its merits and not the opinions of myself, a teacher or anybody else. Trust that God gives wisdom when we desperately plead for it as we're taught in James 1.

Cherish the Bible and as we close again; there is no credibility crisis for the Christian faith. We have solid ground in the Word of God: trust it, cling to it, love it, depend upon it.

Let's Pray