

Roy's Sermon for March 27, 2022

2 Peter 1:16-21 'Not Cleverly Devised Fables, But The Truth About Jesus!'

Last time in 2 Peter we looked at v12-15 of chapter one. 'Remind, Refresh and Remember'. V12 Remind, v13 Refresh and v15 Remember. And although we did look at those three aspects of Peter's parting words to those fledgling Jewish Christian churches, there was perhaps really only one main point. And it was that far from seeking to add anything new to the brethren with his final words as it were, Peter wanted to reinforce all of those simple but sound and profound doctrines of, and about Jesus. Through which their hearts had been first opened, and also through which they would stand against those false teachers that had permeated the churches! V12: "So I will always remind you of these things even though you know them and have been firmly established in them." Yes being reminded of God's past mercies to us, (and of course also those things which Peter means specifically here, those sound biblical truths while rejecting those new and improved Bible teachings) will help us stay the course. While rejecting heresy and peoples twisting's of God's word!

Yes though they knew them and were firmly established in them nonetheless, Peter would continue to remind them! V13. "I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body", "*diegeirien*", to rouse, to stir up. To reignite the fire within them for Christ's truth. To rouse them from their slumber, even as the Psalmist says in Psalm 23:3 "God makes us to lie down." So that we can take a breath, reassess, return, rearm ourselves as He "restores our soul." And Peter will do this as long as he has breath in his body!

And finally v15 as he had "compelled them to make every effort," he says that he would "also make every effort" so that they would do the same, "to remember" all of the things that they had heard from his mouth. Yes Remind, Refresh and Remember. Or Remember, Remember, Remember those simple yet profound truths about Jesus and His love!

And so we pick up the letter in 2 Peter 1:16-21. 'Not Cleverly Devised Fables; But The Truth About Jesus!' V16: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty." In the NASB and the original it says, "following fables having been cleverly devised." What Peter now does here is declare the uniqueness and the authenticity of the things that both he and the other apostles had been proclaiming in Jesus' Name. And he does this prior to revealing the nature and stealth of those ones that he has been warning them against! Chapter 2:2 "They will secretly introduce destructive heresies." 2:3 "In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up." 2:13 "Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight."

Clearly these things describe those "wolves in sheep's clothing" that Paul speaks of in Acts 20 during his farewell to the Ephesian elders. Acts 20:25-31 "now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the Kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. The shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on

your guard. Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

Friends can you see? They in effect had a lust for blood, Paul tells us. That spiritual blood of the souls of the Saints! They are as their father the devil. 1 Peter 5:8 “prowling around like roaring lions seeking souls to devour.” And the commentator explains that what Peter is actually doing here is addressing something of which he and the apostles had been accused. So when he says, “we did not follow cleverly devised fables,” clearly what had been happening was that the validity of their testimony about Jesus was being called into question. This evil seed having been planted by these newcomers!

Brothers and sisters, sadly, this is a pattern that has been repeated throughout the millennia. Men who have toiled for their congregations and have laboured and remained faithful to the truth of God, as they sought to shepherd their flocks always in the light of God's Word, have been ridiculed, bad mouthed and even cast aside and out, basically for someone else who has even been blown in by the wind, with some of those new and improved teachings of the Bible! Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who was one of the greatest preachers the world has ever seen, through whom God spoke. After decades of faithful and powerful preaching through which God brought of tens of thousands to Himself, was cast aside by those whom he had faithfully loved and served!

Beloved, we need to understand that it was not without reason that Peter writes of such things, in this his final letter. In those days people really grasped the significance of being brought “out of darkness into light.” They took their faith seriously. They were not weekend warriors. Many were slaves literally. They understood what it meant to be delivered out of bondage! Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21 “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” This whole life is to be lived for Jesus, and death brings glory!

And in 2 Timothy 4:6 “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.” V8 “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness that the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” Friends, I really do believe that it is very difficult for us to grasp today, but the words which the apostles used were not simply descriptive or hyperbole. The outcome and consequences of being asleep (leading to turning aside from Christ's truth), were eternal!

Ch 2:1 “Destructive heresies bringing swift destruction on themselves.” 2:3 “In their greed will exploit you with cleverly divided fables.” 2:12 “They are like brute beasts.” 2:14 “With eyes full of adultery.” And of course, just as such people do today, all in the name of Jesus! But no says Peter, we are not those ones who come to you “following cleverly devised fables.” Surely his meaning is cleverly thought out children's stories. No we did not come to you with Hansel and Gretel, little Red Riding Hood, or Goldilocks and the three bears!

As a kid, some of my favourite cartoons were Aesop's fables. There was always a quirky story, the good guy won in the end and there would be some kind of right is always best ending. Well Peter says no. That's not who we are, and that's not what we brought to you. Do not confuse us with those others. We told you of the “power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our eyewitnesses of His Majesty.”

Beloved I have mentioned this before. There are those today, (being no doubt of the same ilk as those of whom Peter speaks here), who claim to be modern day apostles. But they lie! Because there is no such thing and there cannot be. Simply by the definition of what an apostle is. Because only “eyewitnesses” are apostles. We have seen before that there were only ever 14 in all. The

original 12, including Judas Iscariot, who was replaced by Mathias. And then of course there was Paul, who had his own window into heaven face to face with Jesus. And though there are indeed those who claim that they have gone into heaven and come back. Some on numerous occasions. Playing golf with Moses, having a barbecue with Abraham and the angels, walking with God around the celestial city (I kid you not). No. They are all liars. The only ones who have gone into heaven are still there. These are liars “following cleverly devised fables.” And they are “cleverly devised,” because people are swallowing this stuff by the hundreds of thousands, dare I say by the millions around the world!

And these evil people know what works, because it is a tried and true recipe that began with those snake oil salesman with their cure-alls in the Wild West of America. It really is that simple. ‘Come to me and Jesus will give you all that you need’. And yet it's even better than that. ‘Come to me and Jesus will give you all that you want!’ But again they are liars “introducing destructive heresies.” And friends, those who follow them by being enticed by the worldly riches and life of ease that they promise. Will indeed follow them, with the destruction of their souls in hell. That is what's at stake.

And that is why these are Peter's parting words: We “were eyewitnesses,” we saw it all you can trust us. When we told you about “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The two words which are used here by Peter for power and coming, are “dunamis” (where we get the word dynamite from” and “parousia” which can mean both coming and presence. And in the account which Peter is about to relate, really could mean both, as he refers to the transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-8 “After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and lead them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah”. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him”. When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up”, he said, “Don't be afraid”. When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.”

So they were “eyewitnesses of the power, the presence and majesty of Jesus.” Look at how Peter relates it. And remember, he unwittingly played a major role in this account. From the original we read “for receiving from God the Father honour and glory, a voice being born to him out of the Magnificent Glory. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Can you see? What Peter declares here is their authoritative privilege, and the authentication of what they witnessed and taught. Their testimony about the glorification of Jesus when God the Father spoke. Not a whole lot of speculation, hear-tell and fairy stories but the Very Voice of God speaking from heaven, as He claimed Jesus to be His One and Only Beloved Son!

To state his authority to speak as he does, Peter says we saw with our eyes “the power and presence of Jesus” revealed. And we heard with our own ears the Very Voice of God claim Jesus as His Very Own Son! And friends, we need to understand that these words that Peter relates here are not just a one off. What I mean is, that they do not stand alone. We find their origin in Psalm 2:1-7 “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one. “Let us break their chains”, they say, “and throw off their fetters.” The One enthroned in heaven laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the Lord he said to me, you are my son, today I have become your Father.” Now yes these words were spoken firstly to David, and do in a sense find their

initial reality in him, yet ultimately and clearly, they find their fulfilment in Jesus! Matthew 3:16-17 "As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." Mark's account is even more breathtaking. We read in Mark 1:9-11: "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, you are my son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased."

The word that Mark uses for "being torn" here is "schidsomenos"; it is the same word that he uses in chapter 15:38 at Jesus' death, when he described the curtain of the temple blocking the way into the most holy place, "being torn from top to bottom." Clearly the significance is that when Jesus was baptised, He ripped heaven apart, beginning that access between man and God. And at His death, when the curtain into the holy of holies was torn, even as He said upon the cross "it is finished," the sacrificing of sheep, bulls and goats and those things being administered through some kind of priesthood, was done!

So, established and prophesied about in Psalm 2, inaugurated at his baptism, and confirmed upon the mountain in Matthew 17, and recounted by Peter, as he claims the absolute authenticity of his and the other apostle's testimony! Yes "this is my beloved Son, with him I am well pleased." Brothers and sisters, this is what Peter lays claim to here. Yes all of this, in declaring his authority to write to them as he did. We saw with our eyes and heard with our ears. And if this is not enough for you to listen to us, rejecting those deceitful blowing ins, when we saw the glorious transformation of the king, as heaven was opened and the voice of God spoke in fulfilment to Psalm 2, yes if all of this is not enough v19. "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

The first question which we need to address is: How are the "words of the prophets made more certain? If when the prophets spoke it was from God, making it the very word of God, how can it be made more certain?" Well the answer to this question is that they cannot be made more certain. God's unchanging word is in effect written in eternity itself. "For I the Lord do not change. So you O descendants of Jacob are not destroyed" Malachi 3:6. Samuel 15:29: "He who is the glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind, for he is not a man, that he should change his mind." So in the same way that God "cannot change his mind" His Word cannot "be made more certain." But what can happen, is that it can be made more clear, having been confirmed by certain events.

And that is what Peter's intention is here! In v17 he uses the term "Majestic Glory." Megalopous." Lucas explains that this is specifically speaking of the Divine Nature of God. As he uses this term to describe the cloud from which God spoke. During the Exodus, it is said that the glory of the Lord went before the people in the "pillar of fire by night" and "the pillar of cloud by day," and that is what Peter is describing to his readers. Again, not "cleverly devise fables" but the reality of the glorified "presence of Jesus" and the divine "Majestic Glory" of the Father, speaking from the cloud of heaven! And notice what he says, "and you will do well to pay attention to it." But he doesn't say pay attention to me, it's "pay attention to it." Pay attention to God's Old Testament Word, and to that which has made the Prophets "more certain" or more clear. Because since Jesus has come those things of the Old Testament, "the Prophets" (and when he uses this term he means the whole council of God) those things, all of those things, have been made more clear. Yes in that confirming sense, "more certain." Yes Jesus had come, confirming everything of the Old Testament. And that manifestation upon the holy mount and in the presence of Peter, Andrew and John, (Moses and

Elijah being with Jesus, and the Voice of God, claiming from heaven that Jesus is His Very Own Son) “you will do well to pay attention to it as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” Peter is telling them that the Old Testament they need to heed.

And Jesus is confirmation of all of those things! Matthew Henry explains that the Old Testament is the prophecy of Christ and the New Testament is the history of Christ and His church. The Old Testament was that “light shining in the darkness” of the world. For “darkness” he uses a very powerful word ‘auchmeros’. And it means squalid, filthy, murky, dry and barren. So in the filth and squalor of a deceived world, the “murkiness and the obscurity” of the truth, the Old Testament as a light in the darkness bursts forth.

And then Jesus comes and says in John 8:12 and 9:5: “I am the light of the world.” John 1:4-5 “In him was life and that life was a light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” John 1:9 “The true light that gives light to every man, was coming into the world.” John 4:14: “But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

And finally from Matthew 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.” Clearly when Jesus spoke in these terms, they would have been familiar with and latched on to them. The things that they had learned about He embodied. That is why they said of Him, “He spoke as one who had authority and not as the Pharisees and teachers of the law.” Yes Jesus owned the words of the Old Testament because they belonged to Him. Peter speaks of “the day dawning” meaning the day of judgement which for the believer will be a day of deliverance and rejoicing. Also of “the morning star rising in their hearts” while in Revelation 22:16b “Jesus said I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright morning star.” You see it's the Morningstar of truth rising in the heart of the believer, and the truth is Christ! Which was all important because there were deceivers at foot!

And he drives the point home in v20-21. “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophets owned “epiluseows”. Literally, the prophets owned loosing of their tongue, speaking something that was obscure! No unlike the so-called apostles and prophets of today, these things were not of their own doing or imaginations! “Above all.” After his defence Paul writes, “Above all,” or most importantly of all. The truth of God, did not, and does not, originate in the minds of men. From which of course, all heresy does! “Following cleverly devise fables.” In regard to the teaching and preaching of God's Word in any way, if it does not begin and end with the scriptures we are in deep trouble! If it is not God's Word testifying to God's Word, through his servants, then it is not God's Word. No the origin of the truth of God lays not in the minds of men, but in the infinite Mind of God!

Paul wrote 2 Timothy 3:16 “All scripture is God breathed.” The scriptures are the very breath of God the Holy Spirit. v21. “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” And as I explained some weeks ago, this being “carried along by the Holy Spirit” is an Apostolic, and indeed an Old Testament prophetic anointing from God! And as with both prophets and apostles, it does not exist today. What is he saying? “Above all” (or of first importance) lay your salvation not in the hands of men, but in the inspired Word of God. Yes “all scripture is God breathed” and all heresy, all falsehood, is born of man! So place your eternal life only, and always, in the Truth of and about Jesus! Do this and you will never go wrong. No not “following cleverly devised fables” but the truth of, and about Jesus!

Let`s Pray!