

“The Word is a Lamp”

2 Peter 1

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: 2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

16 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. 17 For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the majestic glory saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.” 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain.

19 And we have the Word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Spirit.

Imagine with me if you will, that Peter is standing right here before us saying, “I about to depart this life and go to be with Jesus. But I want to leave you with some final exhortations.”

I suspect that you and everyone else would be leaning forward in your pew in anticipation of what Peter might have to say. After all, Peter was described by Jesus as the “Rock upon which I will build the church.” Wouldn’t you have your pen and paper out, ready to capture his last words? **[NOTE 1]**

That’s exactly what we have right here in 2 Peter. The final exhortations, the words that Peter wants to leave lingering in our minds as he passes out of this life and goes to be with his Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Peter is writing with urgency because Jesus had revealed to him that his time was short. These verses are part of a last will and testament of a sort. Peter’s final legacy to the Church. And what did Peter say? It wasn’t “remember me,” but “Hold on to the Word, obey the Word.”

If Jesus had left us anything but His Holy Spirit and the written Word, it would not have remained. People die and pass on. The memory of them fades. What they told us gets mixed up and lost as the years go by. That’s why you don’t build the Church on people. But the Spirit is the eternal God, and the Word ...is forever settled in heaven.

[NOTE 2] What Peter wants us to know is that the Word of God will stand even after people are gone. He wants to make sure we understand that when He talks about the Word, HE’s not talking about a bunch of made-up fairy tales that we just close our eyes and believe in anyway. The apostles did not pull the Gospel, the Word, the truth about Jesus Christ, out of thin air. They were eyewitnesses of the things of which they wrote.

Peter is saying, “You have my solemn testimony that these things are true.” In fact, there is no doubt that Peter was aware that he was writing something special here. We don’t know that he really understood that he was writing something that people would be reading centuries later, but he knew that he was writing to persuade all who would read it. And he knew, or at least the Holy Spirit knew, that for later generations of Christians like you and me, who are far removed from the earthly days of Christ, Peter’s testimony recorded and verified in Scripture would be very important.

So Peter wanted to remove any doubt that the Word we have is true. I don’t know about you, but for me that is real important, because sometimes I have moments of doubt just like everybody else. Preachers are not immune to doubt.

But when the doubts come, it’s great to be able to go back to the basics, open the Word, and hear Peter say again, “When the question crosses your mind, just remember that I am not just telling you a fictional story, not a story that I was told, but a story about what I saw and heard and felt. I was there! I smelled it, heard it, lived it. The Holy Spirit is my witness that this is true.” **[NOTE 3]**

One of the things Peter saw was the transfiguration of Christ, recorded in Matthew chapter 17. You will recall that on the mountain Peter heard God speak and saw Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Jesus. Moses represented the Law and Elijah the prophets—the Old Testament in other words. And Jesus was there representing the New Word from God. So what Peter says is the whole Bible was represented there on that mountain witnessing to the deity of Jesus Christ. Peter never forgot that day. Neither did the Apostle John, what we have now is even better. We have the complete Word of God. Peter says we have a Word that is even better than what he saw on the

mountain. Peter is not saying that there was anything unreliable about the testimony he just gave of what he saw on the mountain. Peter's testimony is now part of the Bible itself, which means the Holy Spirit has verified it.

What Peter wants you and me to know is that we are not "stuck" with "second hand" stories because we didn't get to see and walk with Jesus. Actually, we have the advantage because we have the completed word. So what should our response be? To pay attention to the Word. Not to mess with it by twisting it around to make it say what we want it to say, or ignore it, but to take heed to it as to a lamp shining in the wilderness. What does a lamp do? It gives light. You may be in deep darkness right now. But Peter says if you just hold on to the Word in the darkness, if you stay in the realm of the light, then the darkness will turn to dawning when the "morning star" rises and bursts upon you. **[NOTE 4]**

Pastor, author, and speaker Tony Evans thinks the "rising star" Peter is talking about is the breaking forth of the Word of God into your life in power. That's why he urges us to hold onto the Word in the darkness, because when push comes to shove, it is the one that that will keep you in the light and out of darkness.

This passage is rich with imagery. First the prophetic word is likened to a lamp shining in a dark place, the Second Coming (as the day dawns) and then "the morning star rises in your hearts, which is the inner light due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The prophecy of Scripture is a lamp shining in a dark place in the twofold sense that it forecasts Christ's messianic return and prepares our spirit to respond to the Holy Spirit. The prophecy of Scripture is a lamp shining in a dark place in the twofold sense that it forecasts Christ's messianic return and prepares our spirit to respond to the Holy Spirit. In turn, the indwelling Spirit is like a morning star in that He illuminates the meaning of prophecy for the believer. The complete thought that Peter is trying to communicate is that the sure word of prophecy inwardly clarified and authenticated by the Spirit, will guide us believers like a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns or rather, Christ comes back again. **[NOTE 5]**

So the take home point is "hold on the Word." If it looks like God has forgotten you, hold onto the Word. If it feels like satan is winning out there, hold on to the Word. If it feels like you can't hold on any longer, get somebody else to help you...hold on to the Word. How long? "Until" Now I like that. It doesn't say if or maybe or possibly, but UNTIL, until God takes you up to the mountain like He took Peter. Then when the power and the glory of God shine forth in your life you can tell someone else what you have seen and heard. Whatever else you do, don't let go of the Word. It will see you through any darkness. There is no darkness too dark, there is no trial too long, there is no tunnel of life, valley of the shadow, or slimy pit that is too deep that God and His Word can't light up like the noon-day sun.

You know how in the darkness a little light goes a long way? If you're in the house and there are lights on a candle doesn't seem very bright. But if the electricity goes out that candle seems to light up the whole room. Let the light of the Word light up the room of your mind, your soul, and your heart. Let the Word be a lamp unto your

feet. Let the Word illuminate your mind and your soul! Don't dwell in the darkness. Let the light of God's Word reveal your sin, your shortcomings, knowing that God loves you with an unconditional, persevering, long-suffering, and forgiving love. There is nothing that you can do or fail to do, that would or could cause God's love to stop, His forgiveness to stop being effective, or His mercy to cease.

Tony Evans writes, "I went to Seminary for four years and then got a master's degree in theology; then I went four more years and got my doctorate. When I graduated, I felt like I was still in kindergarten, because the Bible moves from milk to meat. You can gulp milk down, but meat takes a little work. You have to dig a little deeper in the Scriptures to deal with the meat. But the more you chew, the more you find that the Bible contains nourishment beyond what you can even imagine.

I have discovered that the Word calms me when I am ruffled, cools me when I am frustrated, guides me when I am lost, and teaches me when I lack wisdom. It is sufficient for every need. God is waiting to meet you in the power of His Word!

[NOTE 6] Peter is imploring, pleading with us to rely on God's Word. Our faith is not based on some cleverly devised myths or fables. Our faith is based on eyewitness accounts. Peter, the author of our text walked, talked, and lived with Jesus for three years. Peter is telling us what he saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. It is not based on the creation of man's imagination but upon something solid and substantial. Peter heard God say, "This is my Son." He saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. The prophecies have come true. Very few people try to disprove Christianity by saying the prophets were wrong. On the other hand there are books citing hundreds of prophecies that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young (Mormon Prophets) got wrong. Not so with Christianity. Peter was a personal witness to the majesty of Jesus Christ. Peter heard the voice of God, He saw Jesus glorified.

The prophets and now Peter himself are moved and inspired to write by the Holy Spirit. No prophecy was uttered as a private opinion. They received what they gave from God. And Jesus was the fulfillment of much of prophecy. The Word helps us to understand our lives and causes us to have hope for the future.

All are in darkness who do not take heed or pay attention to the Word, the Bible. Without the light of the Bible in your life, you fall into darkness. God's Word comes to shine in our hearts when we are in dark places. But we cannot understand it until it breaks through into our hearts like the dawning of a new day, when the morning star arises just before the sun makes its appearance. That morning star must arise in our hearts and illuminate God's truth to us. What a marvelous experience to have the light of God's truth shine into our hearts as the Holy Spirit reveals truth to us! If you are ever bored with Bible study, or if you are unable to understand what God is saying through a passage, practice what Peter is encouraging us to do. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you. Allow the light to shine into the darkness and expect the truth to emerge as the day dawns.

[NOTE 7] No matter what happens, no matter what circumstances you find yourself in, hold on to the Word and let it light your way, let it inform your choices, determine

your path and enlighten your mind. When the darkness of life starts to overtake you stop and turn ...to the Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you read, ask for insight into your life, and the Scriptures will shed some light on your way. Listen to Peter. Jesus is God's Son, He is alive, and the Holy Spirit will guide us to the light of the Word which when it is taken in and digested, will help us to be, in turn, a light to the world.

Let's pray ... AMEN

Sermon Notes for The Word is a Lamp based on 2 Peter 1
Given at Doster Community Church on October 1, 2023

- I. 2 Peter is Peter's final exhortations, the words that Peter wants to leave lingering in our minds. This is Peter's legacy to the Church.
- II. What Peter wants us to know is that the Word of God will stand forever.
- III. Peter is telling us first-hand what he heard, said, and lived out. One of the things that Peter saw was the Transfiguration of Christ.
- IV. Hold on to the Word in darkness and like a lamp it will light up your world. The sure word of prophecy, inwardly clarified and authenticated by the Holy Spirit, will guide us believers like a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns (Christ comes back again).
- V. Hold on to the Word ... UNTIL ... Don't let go of the Word. It will see you through any darkness.
- VI. Rely on God's Word. Make it the center of your life. Without the Bible in your life, you fall into darkness.
- VII. What are you going to do about it? Please write down one thing that you will do today to start making the Bible a more central part of your life. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness. So make every effort to add to your faith through the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit!