

Speaking From Experience
II Peter 1:16-18

A couple years ago I was given a wonderful gift from the CEF director for Central and Eastern Europe. He is a friend of Jim and Liz Neigh. His name is Czeslaw Bassara. This book is that gift. The title is *Bibliology*.

Allow me to read his introduction.

In the opening chapter of his second letter, Peter has called on believers to make their salvation sure through the conduct of their lives. It is a way of demonstrating a changed heart that can come only as a result of the transforming work of Christ through salvation. Paul boils it down in his second letter to the Corinthian believers by saying that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed and the new is come.

Peter wants these believers to live for Christ and to pass on their faith to succeeding generations. As he concludes this chapter, the remaining verses are important as a way of substantiating what he has said and what he is about to say.

Essentially he writes about the credibility of Scripture. What you believe about it becomes the foundation on which your worldview and your conduct is established. Alter your viewpoint on what you believe about the Bible and I guarantee you that your worldview and your conduct will change. Your beliefs will change, your character will change, your morals will change, your convictions will change.

What Peter has to say sets the stage for what he will write about in chapter 2. Brush the authority of the Word of God aside as unimportant and you will falter both in your faith and in your character and conduct. Without this foundation you will become fodder for every false teacher and wind of doctrine that floats around calling the unsuspecting to

believe their erroneous message.

Peter wanted them to stand strong on the authority and validity of God's Word. If they didn't the false teachers would have a field day signing up new converts to false doctrine.

Cults are masters at it. They take those with weak faith and teach them just enough truth to sound like something the person already believes all the while insert false ideas in with it and pretty soon the false teaching is accepted as truth. For example, visit any major airport back in the 1960's or '70's and chances are you would run into groups of disciples who followed Hare Krishna. I met them in 1976 while on our Sr. High school trip in Washington D.C. To hear the name Hare Krishna automatically puts up red flags. We know them to be a cult. When they talk with people they begin with things most people already believe in. They talk about God and prayer. We believe in God and prayer, right? The vagueness continues until one day they pull the curtain back to reveal the god they really believe in. Christians who are weak in the faith or who don't have a strong belief in the authority of God's Word begin to accept all religions as a plausible faith to follow believing that all religions lead to God.

A couple weeks ago I was reading through the local Grand Blanc paper. There was a short article about the second annual inter-faith gathering. Included in this group were pastors from the Methodist and Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches along with someone from Islam and Hinduism and Baha'i religions. There were interfaith songs and interfaith prayers. Let's all get together and embrace a larger brotherhood of faith.

When Israel marched into the land of Canaan God strictly instructed them not to follow the gods of the surrounding nations. Folks, if you don't believe everything the Bible has to say you will follow anything.

Over the next several weeks we are going to be looking at the closing verses of chapter 1 as they relate to the Bible and why we believe it to be the authoritative, inerrant, infallible, and inspired Word of God without exception and without apology. Peter lays the foundation in these verses so that in chapter 2 he can address the issue of false teachers. If we don't firmly believe in and hold to all the Bible as God's Word to us we are tottering precariously over a dangerous cliff.

Turn in your Bibles to II Peter 1:16-18.

What Peter has to say in these three verses is a preface to verses 19-21. Read any preface in a book and it sets the course of what will be discussed in the pages that follow. The same is true here. Peter has to begin somewhere so he starts with a truthful testimony. He follows it by going back in time to a triumphant transfiguration. Those are our talking points today. From it I want us to come away with a renewed conviction of the truth of the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ.

I. A TRUTHFUL TESTIMONY – v. 16

To many, even among some who say they are Christians, the Bible is nothing more than a Word document in which they can cut and paste at will.

“Thus saith the Lord” no longer has the same authority.

People interpret it now to say “Thus saith the Lord as long as culture accepts it”.

“Thus saith the Lord as long as it doesn't offend anyone else.”

“Thus saith the Lord may be different between what you believe it means and what I believe it means.”

“Thus saith the Lord doesn't apply to me because I believe in (and you fill in the religion).

In verse 16 Peter gives a truthful testimony. He starts out by denouncing tales.

A. Peter Denounced Tales – v. 16a

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories...”

Stories, myths, legends, fables, tales – they are all the same. Take something that is known and embellish a bit and you have a myth or legend. That's how Mt. Olympus became populated with all the Greek gods. Tell it with enough conviction and people believe it. That's why we continue to hear stories about Bigfoot and the Lockness monster. False teachers were spreading myths about Jesus.

Peter first speaks about these tales as being fanciful.

1. They are fanciful

The word ‘for’ links what he is about to say with what he just said in the previous verses. But he also wants to make clear through an emphatic word in the Greek where he stood on the matter. He called these stories or myths cleverly devised and he wanted to make it abundantly clear that he did not follow them. We will see in a moment that Peter is convinced of the truth of God's Word both by what he saw and heard.

Attorneys are good at turning words around to make the person on the witness stand question what they saw and heard about the case they are giving testimony for. Their words are cleverly devised.

What Peter writes he didn't get from some other source. It wasn't some legend that people from one generation to the next passed on with questionable sources. It wasn't from something cleverly invented myth or story or something made up to make people believe a lie.

Four students decided to skip school to avoid taking a math test. They all agreed that they would tell the teacher they had a flat tire on the way to school and therefore couldn't make the test in time. The next day they met with the teacher and told them their tale. The teacher listened carefully and said he was willing to give them a make-up test that day. The test would have only one question. If they all got

the answer right their absence would be excused and they would pass the test. So they wouldn't cheat he put each of the boys in separate rooms and gave them a sheet of paper with this question: which tire was flat?

The false teachers these believers were facing had a way of concocting cleverly designed tales sprinkled with just enough truth to make it sound right, but in reality it was just a lie. A half-truth is still a whole lie. It's like the prank you play where you take a sponge and frost it. It looks like a cake on the outside but the inside is nothing but junk.

These false teachers were telling Christians that the miracles in the gospels were nothing more than allegories. They didn't really happen. They were just stories to get a point across, teach some moral lesson.

Turning water into wine never happened.
 Healing the lepers never happened
 Making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the mute to speak never happened
 Feeding the 5,000 never happened
 Casting out demons never happened
 Walking on water never happened
 Raising the dead never happened
 Jesus' own resurrection never happened

It's nothing different than Henny Penny telling you the sky is falling, or the flat earth society telling you that, well, the earth is flat.

What the false teachers were taught were just fanciful tales. Why, because they are myths, stories, fables.

2. They are fables

Aesop was probably the best known at writing them. Fables are fictional stories with talking animals and inanimate objects who solve problems and have human characteristics. We could include cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse, Bullwinkle the Moose, Felix the Cat and Bugs Bunny into that category as well.

That's the kind of comparison Peter is making with what the false teachers were spouting.

Paul urged Timothy not to let certain men teach false doctrine and myth. (I Timothy 1:4)

Paul went on to tell Timothy to have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales. (4:7)

You have heard them I'm sure:

Don't go outside with wet hair or you'll catch cold.

Foods with mayonnaise spoil faster.

Chicken soup will cure your cold.

Shampoo your hair till it's squeaky clean.

They aren't really true, they just sound good.

Paul instructed Titus not to get caught up in Jewish myths. Even the Jews believed things that were unscriptural. (Titus 1:14)

Peter didn't believe them for a minute.

Paul commended the Bereans because they didn't just accept what he taught. They studied Scripture to ensure it was the truth, not a myth. (Acts 17:11)

Peter denounced tales for what they were – lies. In the same verse he declared the truth.

B. Peter Declared The Truth – v. 16b

“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.”

Pilate once asked Jesus “what is truth”.

Peter is going to tell us in what follows.

First he confessed it.

1. He confessed it

Now the way in which Peter states it here could refer to one of three events. That it's in the past tense eliminates one of those events that is still future and that is His 2nd coming. The two events then could be either a) His incarnation, when He was born or b) His transfiguration on Mt. Hermon. There are a couple of reasons why Peter is speaking

about the transfiguration. The first is the context. He speaks about when they saw His glory and what they heard when God spoke. The second reason this is the transfiguration is that Jesus did not come in power in glory when He was born. His glory was veiled. Other than the angelic host proclaiming His birth to the shepherds there wasn't any fanfare. Not trumpets or banners or loud announcements. The latest addition to the royal family received more notoriety and acclaim than Jesus. His birth was rather obscure. But His transfiguration was another story for a brief time His glory was visible.

Peter's confession here is very similar to the occasion after feeding the 5,000 when Jesus asked the disciples who He was. Peter confessed that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

After Jesus' death before His resurrection, there was some skepticism on the part of the disciples. After all that took place at the crucifixion they were uncertain. The events that day led them to begin questioning if they had been mistaken about Jesus. Days later as Peter and number of the disciples were down at the seashore, Peter decided he was going to return to his former occupation and go fishing. When Jesus hailed them from shore and Peter realized it was in fact the Lord, that day changed his life forever and he remained eternally convinced of Jesus Christ who had come in power and glory. That term is a technical term used in ancient manuscripts to refer to the coming of a king or high dignitary.

John testified the same in his gospel writing: "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. *We have seen His glory*, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (1:14, emphasis added)

But it's one thing to say you believe something and quite another to believe because you have seen it, because you were an eyewitness. What Peter confessed, he corroborated. He was there in person.

2. He corroborated it

On several different occasions I have attended conferences at the Creation Museum in which I have heard and seen Ken Ham, its founder, giving a talk. You can choose whether or not to believe me. Just saying it doesn't substantiate it. However, showing you a picture of me standing next to him is irrefutable evidence that I not only heard him, I saw him in person. I can corroborate his existence by my presence in a photo with him.

Peter says he was an eyewitness. He was there at the transfiguration and can speak with authority about the event and what he saw.

About 20 years ago I was subpoenaed to give a testimony to a possible child abuse case that I had witnessed involving a mother and her daughter. I wasn't randomly selected from the phone book to come and give a testimony about something I knew nothing about nor saw happen. I had to testify to what I saw because I was there witnessing it as it unfolded.

Peter saw what he saw, confirmed as well by James and John who were with him, that what they saw was real and his testimony trustworthy. He remains convinced of the truth, not his version of the truth. It wasn't from last night's pizza.

It wasn't from a sleep induced stupor.

It wasn't from some dream.

It wasn't from something he read or heard from someone else.

He was there.

He confessed it.

He corroborated it.

It was a truthful testimony.

In verses 17-18 Peter speaks specifically about what he saw – a triumphal transfiguration.

II. A TRIUMPHAL TRANSFIGURATION – vs. 17-18

In the transfiguration we have a taste or glimpse into the glory of Christ. Philippians 2 tells us that His glory had been veiled or hidden, but in the transfiguration it is revealed for a moment.

Philippians 2:6-8

We are told in Luke 9:28 that about 8 days after Peter's confession, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him up into a mountain. The Bible is silent about the location, but scholars have speculated one of two places. Some hold it to be Mt. Tabor, which is considered the traditional site. Those who dispute this view do so because of the distance from Caesarea Philippi, which was the location of Peter's confession. They also dispute this location because Mt. Tabor wasn't very high its and there was also a fortress that occupied the hilltop making it an unlikely or unsuitable place for the transfiguration to occur.

Mt. Hermon which is both closer and stands over 9,000 ft. versus the 1,800 feet of Mt. Tabor, make it a more plausible location. It is also close to Caesarea Philippi where Peter confessed Christ.

Luke 9 tells us that they had gone up into the mountain for the purpose of praying. It is while Jesus was praying that something incredible happened. We don't have the privilege of knowing the context of His prayer, only that while praying He began to glow. It was truly one of those mountain top experiences you hear some people tell about.

The text tells us that His appearance changed. His face changed. His clothes became bright as a flash of lightning. In the book of Revelation John gives us a picture of what that might have looked like.
Revelation 1:10-16

In addition to Jesus standing there in His glory, two men appeared with Him. We discover from the text are Moses and Elijah.

Why not Adam and Noah or Daniel and David or Abraham and Elisha?

Moses represented the Law and Elijah the prophets. They are there discussing with Jesus His own exodus referring to His upcoming crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

The transfiguration gives us is a window into the glory to come when Christ returns in His glory. Or to put it another way, the transfiguration shows us what it will be like in heaven. Christ will be there in all His glory, nothing hidden. Old Testament saints will be there represented by the appearance of Moses and Elijah. New Testament saints represented by Peter, James and John will all be present as will God the Father.

In Luke's account of the transfiguration Peter was a bit befuddled by the whole ordeal and didn't really know what to say, so he said the first thing that came to mind. "Hey this is really cool for us to be here. Let's put up some tents and stay here."
(That's a paraphrase).

With what happened next and to what Peter attests to is an affirmation of Christ's deity.

A. It Affirmed Christ's Deity

Peter says he heard a voice. The term he uses is another name for God. He calls him the "Majestic Glory". It God speaking: "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."

What God said affirmed their relationship. This was His Son making Jesus equal with God, attributing to Him an identical nature with God. It affirmed the perfect nature of Jesus. It affirmed the authority and power of the gospel. It affirmed that what Jesus was doing and had done was approved by God.

Jesus was being exalted by the Father for who He was and what He was doing and about to do. Jesus was who He claimed to be and who Peter affirmed

Him to be. In essence he was telling his readers to believe what he had taught them versus what these false teachers were proclaiming about Christ, so that they could stand strong in their faith and not be swayed. He was there. He saw it. The false teachers weren't there. They could only make things up.

Essentially Peter was telling them the same thing Paul conveyed to Timothy to "watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (I Timothy 4:16)

Not only did the transfiguration affirm Christ's deity, it affirmed Christ's destiny.

B. It Affirmed Christ's Destiny

Because God was pleased with His Son, He would exalt Him to His rightful place seated on His throne in heaven. In speaking from heaven it would be the place to which Christ would soon return, the place where He could once again display His glory. Philippians 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Matthew 24:30 "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Someday, yet future, we will see Him and be with Him in His glory.

Folks, as we wrap up today, here's what I want you to get from the message. Peter testifies to the Word of God. Jesus is who He claims to be not only because the Bible affirms it but because God the

Father affirmed it. You can believe Peter because you can believe the Word of God.

Scripture testifies to the truth about Jesus, the salvation He offers which brings with it eternal life. This book, God's Word is truth. Peter wanted to encourage believers then and now to stand strong in the truth of God's Word and not be deceived by false teaching.

Paul warned Timothy of a day when Christians would not tolerate sound doctrine but instead allow their ears to be tickled eventually leading them from the truth. Hold to the truth. (II Timothy 4:3)

Peter could testify to the truth because he was an eyewitness to it. You, too, can testify to the truth by the transformation that has taken place in your life through Christ. People may not believe what you say but they can't deny the truth of what they see.