

## The Illumination of God's Word II Peter 1:19

Turn in your Bibles this morning to II Peter 1:19-21. Over the next several weeks we are going to look at this passage as it relates to the Bible. We will take each verse and consider three important truths.

From verse 19 we will consider the illumination of the Bible.

From verse 20 we will consider the revelation of the Bible.

From verse 21 we will consider the inspiration of the Bible.

Then we will wrap up this section looking at verses 19-21 as a whole but addressing the Bible as a "light shining in dark places."

From verse 19 let's look at this verse as Peter points back to the prophets.

The prophets words are indisputable  
The prophets words are illuminating  
The prophets words are instructional

About the Bible Robert Chapman has this to say: "This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts binding, its histories are true and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, test the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, it will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It

involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor and condemns all who will trifle with its sacred contents."

Erwin Lutzer states that "The Bible is a book of answers, not a book of questions. It guides us in matters where the mind cannot penetrate, and where human reason leaves us unsatisfied. Many blessings are given to those who begin an honest search, willing to follow the trail of truth wherever it might lead."

George Whitefield, one of the preachers of the Great Awakening said "God has condescended to become an author, and yet people will not read His writings. There are very few that ever gave this Book of God, the grand charter of salvation, one fair reading."

Many times man has attempted to destroy the Bible. In A.D. 303 the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to destroy Christians and their Bible. The persecution that followed was brutal. Over a burned and extinguished Bible, Diocletian built a monument on which he wrote these triumphant words, "Extincto nomine Christianorum" (the name Christian is extinguished). Twenty-five years later, Diocletian was dead and the new Emperor Constantine commissioned fifty copies of the Bible to be prepared at government expense.

During the time of the Enlightenment in 1776, Voltaire, the French philosopher, announced, "One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity-seeker." One hundred years later Voltaire was dead and his own press and house were being used to print and store Bibles by the Geneva Bible Society. One hundred years from the day of Voltaire's prediction, the first edition of his work sold for eleven cents in Paris, but the British government paid the Czar of Russia one-half million dollars for an ancient Bible manuscript.

A monument stands for the many Huguenots who were martyred for the cause of Christ and the defense of the Gospel. Inscribed on that monument are these words:

Hammer away, ye unregenerate hands  
Your hammer breaks, God's anvil stands.

Lutzer adds "The Bible is strong enough to withstand the blows of its severest critics; it is able to assuage our doubts and inspire confidence that God has spoken."

Mankind will always attempt to undermine the authority of the Bible, even outlaw it.

The courts have banned it in school, and limited it in the military.

Hollywood has mocked it.

Liberals have rejected it.

Yet it survives and sprouts and blooms and produces untold fruit. Its message is irrefutable and its power is undeniable. It will remain forever no matter what attempts man contrives to discredit it or destroy it.

There are those who claim it is outdated and irrelevant.

What does Peter have to say?

## I. THE PROPHETS WORDS ARE INDISPUTABLE

Peter has just spoken about the transfiguration as an event in history to which he was an eyewitness. He saw firsthand the glory of Christ. James and John were with them and together they saw the glory that will be revealed to us at Christ's second coming. As we saw last week the transfiguration gives us a window into what heaven will be like where Old and New Testament saints and believers will be together with the glorified Christ. The transfiguration confirmed the Old Testament and attested to the deity of Christ as being the Son of God, equal with God.

In verse 19 we notice first that the words of the prophets are highly reliable.

A. Their Words Are Highly Reliable – they can be trusted

*"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain."*

There are two views about what Peter means here. One view considers these words to mean that the writings of the Old Testament are even "more certain" than Peter's remarkable experience on the mountain at the transfiguration of Christ. This view emphasizes the complete reliability of Scripture.

The second view holds that Peter's experience of the transfiguration confirms the message of the Old Testament as being true. One author says that "the transfiguration makes the already sure prophecy of the Old Testament even "more sure".

In effect what Peter is saying is this: "if you don't believe me, go back and read the prophets."

Now let me add here before we go any further, that when Peter is referring to the prophets he is not speaking only of the prophets who have books named after them or others like Elijah and Elisha. Peter uses the term as a reference to all the Word of God. It's all prophetic in the sense that it is pointing to Christ. Prophecy isn't just about future events. It's about God's redemption of mankind through Christ that culminates in future events.

God's voice on the mountain at the time of the transfiguration made the voice of the prophets more sure. It substantiated the truth of what they said. People could question Peter's experience but they could not question the truth that was written.

Jesus prayed in John 17:17 that we might be sanctified (made holy) by the truth and then said that God's Word is truth.

The truth of God's Word is evident in Peter's sermons in Acts. He goes back and draws from the Old Testament in Acts 2 to explain what the Jews witnessed on the Day of Pentecost. He used the Old Testament to substantiate the claims of the risen Christ.

In John 5:39-40 Jesus condemned the Jews because even though they searched the Scriptures believing that in them they would find eternal life, yet they refused to believe the very Scriptures that testified about Him.

Paul wrote to the Romans (16:25-27) about hidden mysteries written long ago that were revealed through the prophetic writings so that the nations might believe and obey God.

The words of Scripture are reliable.

Do you trust them?

Do you believe that there are no errors in the original writings? We call that the inerrancy of Scripture.

Do you believe that it is impossible for Scripture to have errors? We call that the infallibility of Scripture.

It contains no errors because it is not possible for it to have any errors because it was written through man by God's Holy Spirit. There are no supposed contradictions as some would argue. We can take God's Word as truth because He wrote it and God Himself is truth. Numbers 23:19 says that God cannot lie, so we can believe that His Word will not lie, that it is reliable. What is at stake here is the authority of God's Word. To say that we are going to obey God, we must then obey His Word. If you deny the authority of God's Word in one area, it will be easy to deny the authority of God's Word in another area.

In Psalm 19:7 we read that "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." That means it is without error and can be trusted.

That verse goes on to say that "the statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple."

Paul commended the Thessalonians that they had received the Word of God which was at work in them that believed. (I Thessalonians 2:13)

The words of Scripture are highly reliable, they can be trusted.

Peter continues by saying that the prophets words are highly regarded, they can be transformational.

B. Their Words Are Highly Regarded – they can be transformational

"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, *and you will do well to pay attention to it*"

The word in the KJV is "heed". It means to pay careful attention to or take notice of. This week I'm driving to Washington D.C. for a conference. As I drive, especially when I get into the city, I'm going to pay close attention to the signs so I don't get lost. There will be markers to tell me how fast to drive, which lane to be in, when I should go or stop, where I should turn. They're designed to help me arrive at my destination safely. They aren't open for interpretation or debate. I would do well to heed them.

The Bible is a book that navigates us through life. It has markers to help us begin a journey of following Christ so that we arrive at our destination in heaven safely.

It tells us how to respond to difficult circumstances  
It tells us how to discern false teaching  
It tells us how we are to work  
It tells us how to treat others  
It has guidelines for marriage, raising kids, handling money, and ethics for work  
It is our guidebook, compass, and map for living.

As David reminded me the Bible is the Christian's *Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth*.

In his first letter Peter was concerned about how they were responding to persecution and gave instruction on how to live in spite of such difficulty. In this letter he is concerned about the false teachers that were in the church and wanted to help them stand strong in their faith without being swept away by erroneous teaching.

Take heed to the Words of Scripture. Let it guide you and light your way. Live out the chorus we sing from Psalm 119:105.

Psalm 119:105 “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

One summer as a counselor at camp I was given a week off. On Thursday night campers were taken out into the woods to spend the night out in the open under the stars. Chapel was in the woods. I decided that I was going to go out by myself. I grabbed my pup tent, sleeping bag, food and water and headed out. It was still light when I left my campsite for chapel, but when it was over, it was dark. No worries. I brought something to light my way back. I thought I would be real cool and demonstrate my skills as a woodsman. Instead of a flashlight I decided to use a candle. How many of you know that your surroundings in the light look a whole lot different than in the dark? How many of you know that a candle, while it gives off light, doesn't give off a lot of light or even a bright light? How many of you know that rustling noises in the brush, at night, can make a person a little uneasy when your candle doesn't illuminate that far in the direction of the noise you just heard? There I was in the middle of 15,000 acres with a candle wandering my way back to my little camp site. I stand here having survived.

When we stumble in life isn't the fault of God's Word being unclear. It's meant to light our path and guide our steps. It will show you the way. So when you read it, heed it.

Jeremiah says that when God's Word came to him,

he ate them and they were his joy and heart's delight. (Jeremiah 15:16)

The prophets words are indisputable.

The prophets words are illuminating.

## II. THE PROPHETS WORDS ARE ILLUMINATING

The word illuminate means to give light to; to brighten; to make clear, explain, inform, instruct, enlighten.

We note that their words penetrate the present darkness.

### A. Their Words Penetrate The Present Darkness

“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*”

On my camping trip a flashlight would have worked much better than a candle. It was dark and what I really needed was something to penetrate the darkness. I needed a brighter light.

The word “dark” literally means dry or squalid, a place that is murky. Peter used it here to describe how light reveals the dirt and filth of sin that is in the world or that is in the heart. We read in John 3:19-20 that darkness hates the light, but when the light comes no darkness can dispel its power.

You have probably washed your windows thinking that they were clean only to find lots of streaks when the light of the sun shone directly through.

The state of the world and indeed the state of the heart is dark. The heart is deceitfully wicked the Bible says and God's Word is a light in that darkness. Jesus says in John 8:12 that He is the light of the world. Whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness. He reveals the heart of sin and points to the way to eternal life. Follow His light.

John opens his gospel by telling us that the Word was God and that by Him all things were made. “In Him is life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” (John 1:1-5)

The degree to which the Word of God illuminates our path is the degree to which we spend time reading and heeding it.

Luke 24:13-32 (25, 32)

We desperately need the light of God’s Word to pull us out of darkness and to keep us from falling back into the filth of the world. But darkness will not last forever. Our verse also describes how their words prepare for the pending dawn.

#### B. Their Words Prepare For The Pending Dawn

“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 heart.*”

The word “until” speaks of something that is yet future. The word “day” is speaking of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ that is still future.

“Morning star” is another name that refers to Christ. We get our English word phosphorous from this Greek word. It literally means light bearer. The Greeks used it to describe their deities or kings. It’s the name given to Venus which is the last star visible before the coming dawn and morning sun. Many lived in the darkness of Nero’s reign, but there was a brighter day coming for believers.

Jesus is the true light bearer who will come in all His glory. Until that time Scripture is a light and the Holy Spirit is the means by which Scripture is illuminated to us.

John 16:13 “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He

hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come.”

Ephesians 1:17-19a “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparable great power for us who believe.”

Are you reading God’s Word, letting the Holy Spirit teach you as you prepare for Christ’s return?

When you read are you asking God’s Spirit to teach you His truth and reveal His plans for you through His Word?

Prepare for the coming of Christ by reading and heeding His Word which will light your way. Let His Word penetrate your heart and then let your life penetrate the darkness of the world.

In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus says that we are the light of the world and encourages us not to hide our light. Some people will never read the Bible, but they will read you. You may be the only Bible some people will read. Let His Word penetrate the darkness and prepare for the coming dawn.

There was once a dark cave, deep down in the ground, underneath the earth and hidden away from view. Because it was so deep in the earth, the light had never been there. The cave had never seen light. The word ‘light’ meant nothing to the cave, who couldn’t imagine what ‘light’ might be.

Then one day, the sun sent an invitation to the cave, inviting it to come up and visit. When the cave came up to visit the sun it was amazed and delighted, because the cave had never seen light before, and it was dazzled by the wonder of the experience.

Feeling so grateful to the sun for inviting it to visit, the cave wanted to return the kindness, and so it invited the sun to come down to visit it sometime, because the sun had never seen darkness.

So the day came, and the sun entered the cave, it looked around with great interest, wondering what 'darkness' would be like. Then it became puzzled, and asked the cave, 'Where is the darkness?' But there was none.

Be prepared for the coming of Christ.  
The words of the prophets illuminate.  
There is one final point I want to leave with you.  
The prophets words are instructional.

### III. THE PROPHETS WORDS ARE INSTRUCTIONAL

Czeslaw Bassara wrote: "The Bible is a spiritual book, so the Christian needs spiritual help when he comes to interpret it and understand it."

#### A. The Power Of Their Words – we are supplied by the Holy Spirit for spiritual discernment

We read in II Corinthians 4:4 that the "god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel".

In his first letter to them (I Corinthians 2:9-3:3), Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God to reveal them to us. He adds that only a non-Christian cannot understand or accept the Bible because He does not have the Holy Spirit. That's why God's Word seems foolish.

But then Paul adds something important. He also says that some Christians won't understand or accept what the Bible says because they are carnal meaning that they are still living like the world. A non-Christian does not have the spiritual capacity to understand the Word of God because he or she does not have the Holy Spirit to teach them. I believe there is only one truth from God's Word that the Spirit reveals to an unsaved person. It is that they are sinners and they need a Savior and He shows them how to be saved. That's the only spiritual truth I believe a non-Christian can

understand because it is the Holy Spirit who reveals it to them. Oh, he may understand that he needs to be moral that mimics Christian virtue, but remember there is something innate in every person to have a sense of right and wrong, because God put that there. So when a non-believer says they've read the Bible and they didn't get anything out of it, it's because they don't have the right Teacher.

Now let's say a person is a Christian. At some point in their life they placed faith in Christ for salvation. When they first got saved they ate up Scripture reading it and getting all kinds of things out of it to guide their lives. They understood it, took notes about it and applied it. It made sense. But then they stopped being as regular in their reading habits as they once were and a change began to be seen in how they lived. They weren't as careful about what they said or how they acted. Paul says these people still have to be fed spiritual baby food because they still living like the world. Sin can keep the Spirit from effectively teaching.

King David's prayer ought to be our prayer before we begin to study God's Word. Ask God to search our heart to see if there is any sin in us. The job of the Holy Spirit is to teach us and He can't do if there is sin.

Before I got glasses I might be in a conversation with someone wearing glasses and see all the specks of dust and smudges and think to myself how in the world that person could see through them. Now that I have glasses it's easy to become oblivious to the smudges, but when I clean them I'm amazed how much clearer things are.

Czeslaw Bassara puts it simply: "Illumination depends on a man's relationship with Christ." If we want the Holy Spirit to teach us we need to let Him clean the smudges in our life. Clean your heart by confessing sin so that God's Spirit can teach you. God's Word will give us spiritual discernment if we let Him do His job. He illuminates us so that we can

apply its truth to love it and live it out in our lives. The purpose of the Word is for the Holy Spirit to help us with spiritual development.

B. The Purpose of Their Words – we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit for Spiritual development

II Timothy 3:16-17 explains that all Scripture is given for doctrine, for rebuking, for correction, and for instruction in right living so that we might be fully equipped for every good work.

His task is not only to teach us but to transform us through the use of God's Word. Illumination always leads to action.

Psalm 119:9, 11

The goal is to produce Christ-like character in the believer.

We already mentioned that sin can hinder us from being taught by the Spirit or not being saved in the first place.

In Mark 7:7-13 we see that tradition can keep us from hearing the Spirit speak. That's what Jesus condemned the Pharisees in this passage for.

In Acts 9 Saul was so bent on following the traditions of the Pharisees he almost missed the opportunity to hear what Christ said.

In Mark 12:24 Jesus said that a lack of knowledge or not knowing the Scriptures kept people from understanding.

In Acts 17:11 Paul said that the Thessalonians had a careless or casual attitude about the Bible.

The Holy Spirit wants to illuminate you with the truth of God's Word so that your path in this life will be properly lighted.

It guides your steps and guards your heart. It is highly reliable and is to be highly regarded.

It penetrates the darkness and prepares for dawn. It is powerful supplying what you need to be discerning and its purpose is to strengthen you for spiritual development.

Don't let fear keep you from understanding the Word.

Don't let resistance keep you in spiritual darkness.

Through illumination God is inviting all to come out of darkness and experience His light. Be prepared for Christ's return.