

## "CHRISTIAN GROWTH AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES"

2 Peter 1:12-21

### Introduction:

How many Bibles do you own? How many of them do you use? The Bible continues to be a good seller in America. The popularity of the Bible as a book can be seen in the many different translations and editions in which it can be found. However, all of this can be very misleading. Most evangelical Christians own more Bibles than they use. Very few of us would make claims to be proficient in the use of the Bible.

There is a relationship between Christian growth and the Holy Scriptures. Peter wrote this second letter out of a burden for Christian growth. As he saw the false teachers infiltrating the Christian ranks, he knew that only the growing Christians would be able to stand against them. This little letter was written to prepare them to face the false teachers. This led to the words we have in this text about the Holy Scriptures.

A part of this passage is autobiographical. It gives some helpful information about Peter, and his reflections over a long Christian career. But the most helpful thing here is the insight it offers us into the nature and the use of the Holy Scriptures. Let's look into the passage in some detail for these matters.

### I. The Source of the Holy Scriptures.

Where did our Bible come from? What about this little letter that bears the name of Simon Peter? As Peter shares with the Christians his motivation in writing this letter, it might seem logical to see a man as the primary source of the letter. Peter removes all doubt about the source of the Holy Scriptures.

First, he emphatically denies that the Scriptures are of human origin. He does not deny the humanity of the Bible, but rather the human origin of the Scriptures, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation." Here the apostle states a first principle by which we can always be guided when we are using the Holy Scriptures. This is the significance of "first" in this statement.

But what is it we know? This verse has often been misused. "Interpretation" has led some astray. This verse is not about the interpretation of the Scriptures, but is rather about the origin of the Scriptures. The NIV makes this clear. It reads, "Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." What we have in the Scripture is not the viewpoint of some man, or his limited perception of things. Peter makes this clear in his next statement, "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man." The word translated "in old time" literally means "at any time." This term does not limit this claim to just the Old Testament Scriptures, but rather claims that no Scripture came to be written just because a man wanted to write something.

This does not deny the human element in the Bible. Obviously the Bible was written in human language and reflects the culture and circumstances in which it was written. This is what makes the study of language and history so helpful in gaining an understanding of the Bible. But it does deny that the Bible is just a product of man. You cannot explain the Bible in that way.

Second, he emphatically affirms that the Bible is of Divine origin. "But holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. " The Greek sentence puts the Holy Spirit first and the men last. They are the two agents involved in the giving of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit "moved" or "carried along" the men. The picture in that word is that of sails catching the wind and being carried along. Paul calls this process, "God breathed," or "inspired." Neither

Peter nor Paul explained to us just exactly how this happened. Rather both of them referred to it to let us know what we have in the Bible is the trustworthy, authoritative Word of God. They wanted us to know that we could stake everything on the trustworthiness of the Holy Scriptures. It is the product of the Spirit of God moving in a unique, supernatural way on the lives of a few saluted men over a period of several hundred years.

I am ready to accept the Bible's witness to itself. We ought not to be swayed too much by what men say about the Bible. It can speak for itself and give the best explanation of itself.

But what can we know about the purpose of the Bible?

## II. The Purpose of the Holy Scriptures.

From this autobiographical statement of Peter and the instructions that he gives, we learn two important things about the purpose of the holy Scriptures.

First, the Scriptures were written to preserve the things we need to know. We discover this as Peter explains his intention in writing this letter. He had received some things from God that must be passed on. In the NIV we read, "And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things." The things Peter wanted them to remember were things that had come directly from the Lord Himself.

This ought to help you when you come to read and study the Bible. It contains the thing God felt that you and I needed to know. It may not satisfy our curiosity, but it will meet our need. Paul declared that by it "we are thoroughly furnished."

Second, the Scriptures were written to illumine the way we ought to go. Peter uses the figure employed by the Psalmist when he wrote, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." Peter writes, "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." This statement provides us some insight into our present situation--we are in the dark. What we should do is not always clear to us. If we follow our own natural instincts we are destined to stumble into destruction. Our God knew this so He has graciously provided us a light. It provides us the light we need to take the next step. Our instruction is to keep stepping in its light until the perfect day dawns, and we need it no more.

The growing Christian is aware of the purpose of the Bible, and uses it accordingly.

## III. The Use of the Holy Scriptures.

Peter does not exhaust this subject in this passage, but he does make two very helpful suggestions.

First, we should constantly remember the Holy Scriptures. Evidently Peter had a keen appreciation for the power of the faculty of memory. This is where he begins this discussion of the Holy Scriptures. "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things." He felt this way even though he felt sure they already knew and believed them. "Though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." Peter felt so deeply about this that he felt it to be his lifelong responsibility to keep their memory refreshed.

This is an important truth for us. We are to make sure that our minds are constantly soaked with the word of God. The supreme example of this use of Scripture is seen in the Lord Jesus. His life was so filled with the Scriptures that he just naturally evaluated every situation in light of the Holy Scriptures. He was able to respond to every temptation with a relevant statement of Scripture. He even responded to the ordeal of the cross with words of Scripture upon His lips. The famous cry that came out of the darkness of the cross was a direct quotation from Psalms 22 Jesus truly remembered the Scriptures constantly.

Let me suggest something we might do to aid our memory. There are some things we can do. We can be a regular reader of the Scriptures. I find great joy in trying to read the Bible through every year. We can find help in learning how to be a good listener to others and share the Word. One aid in being a good listener is to take notes on what we hear. We can discipline ourselves to be careful students of the Scripture. Study goes beyond reading to do some in depth search and application. We can commit scripture to memory. The Psalmist declared, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." But we can also develop the art of meditating on the Scriptures. All of the other activities are good preparation for meditation. The promises of Scriptures are reserved for those who meditate on the Scriptures. The Psalmist wrote, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord; in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water which bringeth forth his fruit in its seasons; its leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." So it is the proper use of the Holy Scriptures to remember them day and night.

The other use of Scripture set forth in this text is to follow it carefully. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as into a light that shineth in a dark place," to "take heed" is to pay attention to, to follow the counsel of. The Holy Scriptures are to be our guide in our daily conduct. It gives us the principle for home life, for business, for church life, for our involvement as citizens. James reminds us that the blessing comes to us when we do what the Scriptures teach, when we walk in their light. He wrote, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does." So the Bible is for living. What we need today is not just a company of Bible believers, but rather a company of Bible-livers! Those who live the Bible will be the ones who grow in grace and knowledge.

Conclusion:

What will your response to this message be? I want to urge you to make some definite commitment as to how you will use your Bibles in the days ahead?

Do you need a commitment to become a regular reader?

Do you need to begin memorizing?

Do you need to start living some part of the Bible?

Be specific in your commitment! Do it now.