

## MEN SPOKE FROM GOD

Text: 2 Peter 1:19-21

Belgic Confession Art 3

Readings: Matthew 17:1-13; 2 Pet 1:10-2:3

Theme: The Scriptures originate from God and are his reliable word about Christ from the Holy Spirit.

Purpose: To emphasize that the Scriptures originate from God and that we must pay attention to them.

Sometimes you will hear one person say to another; "Would you please write that down?"

Or someone will say, "Would you please put that in writing?" He wants a written record of what was said.

At times you will have had to write something down.

Maybe you have made a complaint and to follow it through you needed to put in a formal written statement.

Or you might be applying for a position and the form says that all applications must be made "in writing".

If you are a witness to an accident the police will write down what you say and have you check it over.

You know that you can't believe everything you read, but if something is written down it is more reliable than something that is heard or said or passed on verbally. If it is written down you can read it, study it, check it and refer back to it.

This is why God, in his wisdom and providence, has given us his written word. Guido de Bres, the author of this confession wrote; "...God, from a special care which he had for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing...

Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures." (Belgic Conf Art 3)

These Scriptures are the Word of God - they originated from him and were written down and are reliable. This is what Peter tells us here.

**Context:** Peter wrote this letter because he wanted to remind these Christians of truths they needed to know (v 12); he wanted to refresh their memory so they would not forget what he had taught them (v 13). He knew he would not be around for much longer and he wanted to make every effort to help them remember these things (v 15).

This was especially important because there were false teachers in the churches who had come up with "cleverly invented stories" (1:16) and ""destructive heresies" (2:3). These false teachers claimed a new word of God that superceded God's written word.

In response Peter presented two reasons why his readers could rely on what the apostles had written about the Lord Jesus Christ" (v 16).

i. The first reason was that the apostles had personally witnessed the glory of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when they had heard the voice of God saying; "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased." (v 16b-18)

ii. The other reason they needed to believe the message about Jesus was the written testimony of the prophets in the Scriptures. Those men had spoken about Lord Jesus Christ and much of what they had said was written down.

The Word of God is a reliable testimony about Jesus that originated from God the Father and came to us through men who were guided by the Holy Spirit. This is the sure Word of God, originating from him, and we must pay attention to it.

We will consider its origin, its reliability and its importance

## 1. ITS ORIGIN

a. Peter begins with **two negatives**.

i. In verse 20 we read; "*Above all you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation*".

What the prophets said and wrote was not their own analysis of the current situation or their own predictions about the future. They did not think up these words up on their own.

ii. In verse 21 we read, "*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man.*" These were not their own thoughts and ideas; what they said did not come from their own imagination. If that was so then the Bible would be like any other book.

b. Having stated it negatively Peter then explains where their prophecies came from. He states it **positively**, beginning with "but" to emphasize the contrast.

i. "*But men spoke from God...*" (v 21). The words they spoke and wrote came from God. The Scriptures are God's word. The prophets passed on what God had told them. Their message came from God and they were communicating his will, his revelation. So the Scriptures originated with God the Father. The Bible is not the word of men but the Word of God!

ii. Peter wrote, "...men spoke from God as *they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*" The Greek word translated as "carried along" is used in Acts to describe the sailing ship that transported the apostle Paul being carried along by gale force winds (Acts 27:15,17). Used here by Peter the word means that the prophets were open and receptive to God's word; they raised their sails, as it were, and were pushed forward by the Holy Spirit.

Today we talk about the Bible as being "inspired". The Bible is not only an *inspiring* book it is also an *inspired* book.

These verses do not describe exactly *how* this process took place and there are various ideas about what happened.

aa. Some have said that the biblical writers were like typists taking dictation. In our computer age you could compare it to you using word recognition software; you speak and the computer records your words. On this view the Holy Spirit told the writers what to write, word for word. They were only pens in the hands of the Spirit. We call this view *mechanical* inspiration. It aims to preserve the Scriptures as the Word of God but it ignores the people God used.

bb. Liberal scholars have gone to the other extreme. They claim that the Holy Spirit only gave these men some general ideas but not the actual words. This view emphasizes the role of the human authors and minimizes the work of God. The Bible, they say, is a wonderful book and is right up there with other great works of literature, but it is still the work of men. It is a masterpiece of human insight and achievement but it is not the 'word of God'. This view is called *dynamic* inspiration and it is a false view.

cc. A third view is called *organic* inspiration and this does justice to the work of God and the work of men. The Holy Spirit guided the minds and hearts of the writers so that they wrote down exactly what he wanted them to say but they wrote it down using their own words and style.

You see that when you read the Bible; all the writers reflect their own experiences, as in the Psalms; their own perspectives, as in the gospels; their own style of writing, as in the letters. So John wrote differently from Peter, and Luke from Paul. But the Holy Spirit carried them along so that what they wrote down was exactly what God wanted them to say. This means that the Bible is the word of God in the words of men. It is inspired and infallible, it is reliable and trustworthy.

So we have been considering the origin of the Word of God and have seen that it did not come from men but from God; it came from God through men.

## 2. ITS RELIABILITY

a. The Jews had a very high regard for the Scriptures. To say, "It is written", was enough to clinch an argument. If that is what the Scriptures said then they had to be believed.

Jesus himself used this approach with Satan in the temptations in the wilderness; three times he appealed to Scripture and said, "It is written".

And the writers of the New Testament believed this about the Scriptures; they quoted them as the word of God and in some cases built a whole argument on a single word of the Old Testament (cf. Matt 22:43f; John 10:35; Gal 3:16).

b. Peter emphasized that the written word of the prophets was **reliable**. "We have the word of the prophets *made more certain*" (v 19).

The word can also be translated as "most certain" or as "altogether reliable". The Bible is certain, sure and dependable.

It is trustworthy; you can depend on it; you can build your life on what is written in it.

c. This is why God caused this book to be **written** so the Lord's people in all ages would have this reliable record of what God wants us to know.

Luke said he wrote his gospel "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4). (He used a different Greek word for "certain" but it has the same idea.)

Peter, as we have seen in verses 12-15 explained that he wrote this letter so they would know and remember these truths.

The Belgic Confession summarized all this in Art 3 by saying that "God, from a special care which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants... to commit his revealed word to writing."

The Bible is reliable.

## 3. ITS IMPORTANCE

a. Because it originated from God and is reliable you must "**pay attention to it**" (v 19).

That means you need to read it, study it, learn it, absorb it, memorise it, meditate on it so that it becomes part of you.

John Wesley wrote: "O, give me that book. At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book!"

Jonathan Edwards, the famous American theologian and philosopher, while only in his early twenties, resolved, "To study the scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently" so as to clearly see himself grow in knowledge of them.

Will that be your resolution? Your Bible won't do you any good sitting on a shelf at home gathering dust, or next to your bed unread, or in your car getting bent by the sun. You need to "pay attention to it".

Much of our weakness and ineffectiveness as Christians comes from our neglect of God's Word; we are simply not paying attention to the Bible. We pay far more attention to TV, DVDs, newspapers, magazines, the internet and a 101 other distractions.

For the sake of your spiritual health and your eternal well-being you must pay attention to the Scriptures, both in your own reading and study of them and in your hearing and listening to them read and preached.

b. "Pay attention to it, **as to a light shining in a dark place....**"

The word Peter used for dark can be translated as murky. That describes our nation today - it is gloomy, dismal. People walk in darkness; they have no basis for morals, no foundation for their lives, no base line of truth. They are lost, searching, floundering.

This is why we need the Bible; it gives us light in this dark world.

Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 36:9, "In your light we see light."

c. Pay attention to the word of God "**until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.**"

The Greek word translated as "morning star" is *phosphorus* and this is the only time it is used in the New Testament. The morning star is the planet Venus, which catches the rays of the sun just before dawn, but Peter used it as a picture of Jesus.

He looks ahead to the **second coming of Christ**, which will be the dawning of a new day.

The prophecies of Balaam in Numbers spoke of a star that would come out of Jacob (Num 24:17).

Malachi spoke of the sun of righteousness (4:2).

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, spoke of Jesus as the rising sun who has come to us from heaven (Luke 1:78).

Jesus spoke of himself as "the bright morning star" (Rev 22:16).

When Jesus returns then the morning star will arise in our hearts and we will see Jesus as he is, face to face, in all his glory and majesty.

In the meantime God has given us **his word**.

It originated from God the Father and was written down by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is a reliable testimony to the honour and glory that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"...you will do well to pay attention to it."

Amen