

Is Your Faith Grounded?

2 Peter 1:12-21

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At the end of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7, He ended with what I call a parable. Some may disagree and call it a story or an illustration. But a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. He told a story about two builders. Most of you are familiar with this. One was a wise builder and the other was a foolish builder. So a wise man and a foolish man. And He said this about the wise man. He said he built the house on rock, a solid rock foundation. And He said that when the rains came and the floods came and the wind blew upon that wise builder's house, it stood strong against the storms that came. Jesus said the wise man is the man who hears My Word—my sayings; context, Sermon on the Mount—and then puts them into practice. Not only is he a hearer of the Word but a doer of the Word.

But then He described another man who He called a foolish man. He said the foolish man also built a house, but he had a different foundation. The foundation for this man's house was sand. And when the rains came and the floods came and the wind beat upon that house, that house fell, and "great was the fall of that man's house." He said, "The foolish man heard My Word but did not obey it." He didn't put it into practice.

I believe that describes what Peter is saying in our passage today. As a result of this text that we cover this morning, you will either become a wise man or a foolish man; you're either building your house, your life, on sand, or on the rock, which is the Word of God, in obedience to that Word. One of the main purposes that 2 Peter was written was to warn the believers about false teachers.

And just a little advertisement for next Sunday, we're going to take two weeks going through chapter 2 in talking about false prophets and false teachers. But I want you to see in 2 Peter 2:1 the warning. He says, "But there were..."—verse 1 of chapter 2—"...false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you..."—so the Old Testament, they had false prophets. Now in the New Testament, they would have false teachers—"...And they will privately bring in damnable heresies. They will deny the Lord Who bought them and they will bring upon themselves swift destruction."

And so the reason Peter is going to be telling us—the end of this first chapter—that we need to have a grounded faith is because there are false teachers among us. And there are false ideas. And we can so easily be swept away with the flood and the tide if we're not standing on the rock of Scripture; amen? So Peter is writing to believers he wanted to stand, or wanted them to be standing, and grounded.

Now, we saw first of all in chapter 1 that we need to have a real faith. And then, secondly, we saw that we need to have a growing faith. And today, thirdly, we see that we need to have a grounded faith. So is your faith real? Is your faith growing? And—so very important—is your faith grounded on the Word of God? If you are grounded and growing, then you'll have a

vibrant faith that cannot be swept away with a false teaching.

So in this text, Peter makes three affirmations about God's Word. If you're taking notes, you can write them down. They're very simple. Three things he says about God's Word.

The first thing he says is that God's Word lives and abides. He's actually contrasting men who die, referring to his own death, and God's Word that lives. I want you to go with me to verse 12, and let's read down to verse 15. Peter says, "Wherefore..."—verse 12—"...I will not be negligent to always put you in remembrance..."—that's a key word. I want you to notice that word "remembrance"—"...of these things..." What things? The things he just got through teaching in verses 1 to 11; all the things about our real faith and our growing faith. Add to your faith, virtue; to your virtue, knowledge; to your knowledge, temperance; to your temperance, godliness. All these things. He says, "If you know these things, I want you to remember them. I want to remind you of them. I want you to be established in the present truth. Yea..."—verse 13—"...I think it's right, as long as I am in this tabernacle..."—referring to his physical body—"...I want to stir you up by putting you in..."—here's the word again—"...remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle..."—or "body"—"...even as the Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease..."—or "my death." He uses the word "exodus"—"...to have these things always in..."—here's the key word again—"...remembrance."

So in verse 12, "I want you to remember"; in verse 13, "I want you to remember"; and in verse 15, "I want you to have these things in remembrance." What things? The things he was writing down for them. He wasn't giving them oral tradition. He was giving them the written Word.

Now Peter knew that he would soon die. He said he had that sense and understanding that he would soon put off his "tabernacle." He says, "Yea, I think it's right..."—verse 13—"...as long as I am in this tent..." Now a couple of different times in verses 13 and 14 he referred to his physical body as a "tent." Why? Because our bodies are only temporary. One day we will die. And by the way, death is an "exodus." He uses it there in that passage when he says, "after my decease" or "my death." We get the word "exodus" from that. It means a "departure." And that's what death is; death is a separation of the soul and the spirit from the physical body. Now there's a lot that could be said, but let me just mention this: Death is not a cessation of existence. When you die, you simply change your address. You got that? You move out of your tent into a "body not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Technically, you're waiting for the Resurrection, the rapture when you'll be reunited with your body. But you're waiting for a "body not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

That's why Paul, when he was talking about the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15, said, "This corruptible..."—referring to his tent—"...shall put on incorruptible." When? When he dies and goes to heaven. This mortal will put on immortality. "And then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death swallowed up in victory.'" So for the Christian "to be absent from the body is to be present with..."—who?—"...the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5. So death is simply folding up the tent and taking up the tent stakes and moving on.

I once spent three months in a tent. I have never spent another night in a tent after that. That cured me from tent camping forever. Don't you ever ask me to go tent camping with you. Three months. I had no pad and my bones were on the hard ground. I thank God I was 21 years old and I could handle it then. I can't handle it now. But that just freed me from tent camping. And I remember when I walked into a house for the first time after that. "Wow!"

That's just a little taste of what it's like to leave this body and to go be with the Lord. The older you get, your tent starts to lean a little bit. Ever seen a crooked tent? Or a leaky tent? Or a torn tent? The older you get, your tent starts to lean and leak and tear. And "Lord, I just want to pull up stakes and go to be with You." And our bodies are only temporary dwelling places, but death is not the cessation of existence. When people die, they are still alive. And you either go to heaven or you go to hell. There're only two places to go when you die. There's no kind of in-between place. There's either heaven or hell. That's why you need to be ready to die. You need to be ready to go be with the Lord, trusting Him as your Lord and Savior. And Peter was.

Now he makes reference here in this text to the fact that Jesus showed him, in verse 14. "Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me that I would put off my tent." What is he referring to? John 21, when Jesus told Peter how he would die. Peter knew how he would die, but he didn't know when he would die. When he was young, he went where he wanted to. When he was old, they would take him by the hand, and He's implying that, "Peter, you're going to be crucified." And tradition tells us that when Peter was crucified, he requested to be crucified upside down, because he didn't feel worthy to die the same way Jesus died on the Cross.

So Peter, knowing that he's going to die, wants to do something for the believers. What does he want to do? He wants to leave them the Word of God. And so he writes to them 1 and 2 Peter, in the same context of John 21, when Jesus told Peter how he was going to die, so "Peter, feed My sheep. Feed My lambs. Feed My Sheep."

Now many believe—and I think, rightfully so—that the Gospel of Mark was influenced by Simon Peter, that Mark got his information from Peter and then he penned his Gospel. And then we have not only the Gospel, the life of Jesus, but we have 1 and 2 Peter, where Peter is doing what Jesus told him to do, "Feed My sheep." So he says, verse 15, "After my death..."—or "my exodus"—"...I want you to have these things..."—the Word of God—"...always in remembrance."

So here's the point: Men die but God's Word lives. Did you know that God's Word is eternal? Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away." "Not one jot or tittle shall in any wise pass from the law until all this be fulfilled." In 1 Peter 1:23-25, Peter again said these words. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." So we were regenerated or born again through the work of the Spirit of God using the Word of God. And that Word is an eternal Word; it lives and abides forever. And then he went on to say, "All flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass. And the grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord endures..."—how long?—"...forever. And this is the Word by which the Gospel is preached unto you." So when you read the Bible, you're reading the living Word. You're reading the

enduring Word. It's something that you can stand on. Men die—Peter would pass—but the Word would live.

Now the second affirmation he makes is in verse 16 down to the first part of verse 19. That is, that God's Word is sure and steadfast. Experience fades but God's Word remains. What Peter's going to do is he's going to describe his experience on Mount Transfiguration, and then in verse 19, he's going to explain that God's Word is more reliable and dependable than their own experiences.

Follow with me beginning in verse 16. He says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables." Now from that word "fables" we get our word "myths." So he's saying, "When we declare to you the power and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, these weren't myths." Have you ever met somebody who says the Bible's full of myths? It's full of fables? That men wrote the Bible, so it can't be trusted, and they just wrote out of their own ideas and they're just fairy tales? Especially Genesis 1-11, this idea of Adam and Eve and creation and God made it all in six days. "Just a bunch of myths or fables. Maybe there are some spiritual truths we can draw from it, but you can't take it to be real, factual; that God could create the heavens and the earth; that there was a literal Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden."

Peter says, verse 16, "We didn't give you fables when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." He is referring to Mount Transfiguration. "For He received from God the Father..."—that is, Jesus Christ, on the Mount, received from God the Father—"...honor and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, saying 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.'"

Peter says, "This voice which came from heaven we heard." So "we saw and we heard when we were with Him on the holy mountain. We have also..."—verse 19—"...a more sure Word of prophecy..."—or "a more sure prophetic Word"—"...whereunto you do well to take heed..." Now stop right there for just a moment. We'll pick up where we left off.

Peter's talking about his experience that we commonly call the "Transfiguration." It's recorded in Matthew 17 and in Mark 9 and in Luke 9. But it's interesting that Matthew wasn't on the mountain, Mark was not on the mountain and Luke was not on the mountain. There were only three men on the mountain: Peter, James and John.

Now I love the story when Jesus was transfigured before them. Jesus had just asked the disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" And Peter said these words: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father, which is in heaven." He wanted him to say, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And then He went on to say, "I'm going to Jerusalem, I'm going to be handed over to the hands of wicked men, and I'm going to be crucified and I'm going to be slain." So Peter just says, "You're the Messiah," and Jesus says, "I'm going to die."

Now this wouldn't compute. Peter and the other guys would be thinking, "What do you mean, Lord? You're the Messiah! You're the Son of the living God! You just said I was blessed for making that pronouncement." "Yes, that's true, but what you don't realize is that I came first to suffer and die. I came to die upon the Cross for the sins of the world, but I'm coming back in my Second Coming in power and glory."

And then He said these words: "There are some of you standing here..."—at the end of Matthew 16—"...who will not die until you see the kingdom of God come with power." Now a lot of people are thrown by that. They're thinking, "Jesus didn't come back before they died. How does that work?" But if you keep reading, in the very next chapter, Matthew 17—and remember, there are no chapter divisions in the Bible when it was originally written—it says that after six days, Jesus took three—Peter, James and John—and He went up to a high mountain, and He was transfigured before them. And they saw His remnant become white and His countenance like the sun. That's the fulfillment of them not dying but seeing the kingdom of God coming in its power. It's right there in the context.

Now here's the point: Jesus was saying to them that the Cross leads to glory. "I'm going to be crucified, but I will come back in majesty and splendor." Now that's not every detail of the story. I went too long first service, because I went too long on the story. But I can't resist right now; okay? So guess who else was on the mountain? This is awesome; it gets better. Moses—Can you dig it? It doesn't say that in the text; I just threw that in there—and Elijah. Wow! See what happens when you don't go to church. You miss a mountaintop experience. Jesus, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James and John. I want to be there! I want to hang out with these guys.

Now how do they know it was Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, representing the prophets? How did they know? Did they have name tags on? "Hi. My name is Moses." "I'm Elijah, the prophet. Stand back so you won't get burned." How did they know? I just think they knew intuitively. I think this indicates that when we get to heaven, we're going to know one another. People ask me all the time, "Will we know each other in heaven?" And I say, "You think we're going to be dumber in heaven than we are here?" Sure we'll know each other. I believe we'll know each other instantly, completely and intuitively, and that will be a glorious thing.

These guys were actually sleeping when Jesus was originally transfigured. The Bible says that "their eyes were heavy with sleep." It's kind of like the gift of the Apostles, the gift of sleep. And by the way, if you take naps, it's Biblical. Peter, James and John did that on the Mount of Transfiguration. My wife says, "Are you going to take a nap today?" "Yea. Peter, James and John did it. I need to do it too." And when they woke up, they were rubbing their eyes and there's Jesus. Now, what was it? Jesus pulled back the veil of His humanity, and He allowed His deity to shine forth. That's what that transfiguration was. He was the God-man; He was God veiled in flesh. So He pulled back the veil, and He let them see His majesty, His preincarnate glory, His full deity. And it was all so awesome.

And then Peter, not knowing what to say, said, "Lord, this is really great to be here! Let's build

three tabernacles...”—same word he used for his body—“...one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” Now the Bible actually says, “Peter, not knowing what to say,” said that. Let me give you some advise. When you don’t know what to say, zip it. Okay? “I didn’t know what to say, so I just blurted something out.” If you don’t know what to say, just be quiet. Like that old saying, you know; it’s better to be quiet and let people think you’re smart than open your mouth and dispel all doubt. Just zip it, Peter.

It’s almost like that was what God the Father was saying, because at that moment, God the Father spoke audibly. That’s what he’s talking about in this verse. “We heard the voice.” Then the Father spoke and the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased,” or literally, “in Whom My soul delights.” So they saw with their eyes—physically saw Jesus transfigured—and they heard with their ears the voice of God saying, “Thou art My beloved Son, in Whom my soul delights.” And then everyone vanished away except Jesus only.

Now this is to teach us that Jesus supercedes the Law and the prophets; that He is the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets; that He fulfills the Law. And that we look to Jesus; we look to Him only. And that our death will lead to glory. We may carry the cross, but we will also wear the crown, just as Jesus did.

That’s not what Peter is telling the story for. Why is Peter telling the story? The lesson is in verse 19. He says, “We also have a more sure Word of prophecy.” He’s referring to Scripture. Now don’t let that word “prophecy” throw you for a curve and think that he’s just talking about the prophetic Word. He’s talking about the Word of God; the spoken, written Word of God. In the context, this would be the Old Testament, although Peter is going to go on in this epistle and say that Paul’s writings were on an equal par with the Old Testament prophets. But he says, “We have a more sure Word of prophecy.”

Now some interpret that as saying that the prophetic Word is made more sure by our experience. And that’s a possible interpretation, but I don’t think it fits with the whole context. I think more consistently what Peter is saying is “More sure than what we saw with our eyes and heard with our ears is the Word of God.” I believe that’s what Peter is saying. Not only do I believe that’s what Peter is saying, I believe that’s what we should believe as far as our relationship to experience and the Scriptures is concerned. Truth is found in God’s objective, steadfast Word. Experience is subjective.

And this is the way I would put it. You should never judge the Scriptures by your experience. You should always judge your experience by the Scriptures. In other words, experience is fine, but it’s subjective.

If you’ve ever had Mormons visit you—how many of you have ever had Mormons visit you? If you live in a house with a door in it, you’ve had Mormons visit you. If you haven’t had Mormons visit you, you must live on the planet Pluto or something. And all the dear Mormon people who I talk to—and many of them are wonderful people, sincere but sincerely deceived. And we’re going to get that in chapter 2. False prophets. False teachers. Any time a pastor talks about

other “religions” or other “beliefs” or other “faiths,” people get emotional and people get upset. But Jesus said, “You’re going to know the truth, and the truth’s going to set you free.” I believe the truth’s found in the Bible. So we need to judge everything by the Scriptures.

Now every Mormon I’ve talked to, when push comes to shove, and you finally can’t convince them of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, what do they say? “But I have a burning in my bosom.” You ever had a Mormon tell you that? “I have a burning in my bosom.” I can eat a burrito and get a burning in my bosom. I know they don’t like that, but I tell them that. And the older I get when I eat burritos, the more my bosom burns. I love Mexican food, but it doesn’t love me anymore. I don’t know what the deal is.

And the same thing is true of Christians. “I had a dream. I had a vision. I had a word from the Lord.” We have a more sure Word of prophecy. I can’t tell you how many times people have come to me and say, “John, I had a dream. Can you tell me what it means?” “I don’t know what my dreams mean.” Probably means you shouldn’t have eaten that chocolate cake after 11 o’clock at night before you went to bed. All this Halloween candy lately; I’m getting visions and dreams and—it’s chocolate. It’s not from the Holy Spirit.

And then I have people always coming to me and saying, “Oh, I’m a prophet of God, and God wants me to tell you....” Doesn’t God like me anymore? God doesn’t have my number anymore? When people tell me they’re a prophet and they have a word for me, I tell them, “We’re a non-prophet organization.” What I tell them is that I have the Bible. It’s like, “God doesn’t have my number anymore? God doesn’t want to call me? It’s like, why can’t God tell me?”

I believe that when you read the Bible, you’re hearing God speak. I believe God speaks through His Word, and anything someone tells me as a vision or a dream or a word from the Lord, I have to check with God’s Word. This is the standard, this is the plumb line, this is the rule, this is the authority. Every human being has a source of authority. Everyone. Even the atheists. It might be your experience, it might be your intellect, it might be your mom or dad, it might be your college professor, it might be a science textbook—everyone has some source of authority they go to that they believe to be true. I propose to you that if it isn’t the rock of Scripture, if it isn’t God’s immutable, infallible, inerrant, inspired Word, that you cannot know for sure, because you can be deceived. You can be lied to. Your emotions can change. Visions are subjective, and you can’t base truth upon them and words “from the Lord.” This is the only objective truth that we have, God’s holy Word. So what is this section, verse 16 to the first part of verse 19, saying? He’s saying that our faith is not built on emotion or experience or visions or dreams. It’s built on the solid rock of Scripture.

Let me get to my third and last point, because I believe that all this passage is building up to verses 19 to 21. And I should have done a whole sermon based on these verses. But this is the third affirmation. I want you to notice it. Scripture comes from God. Now there’s a lot of important doctrine in these verses, verses 19 to 21. But I would summarize them with this statement: Scripture has its origin—the Bible comes from God. It is unique; it is like no other

book. Follow with me. God back to the beginning of verse 19. He says, "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy..."—or "a more sure prophetic Word," more sure than what we saw with our eyes, what we heard with our ears is God's immutable, unchanging Word—"...whereunto you do well to take heed." Now notice it: God's Word is like "a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." I love that.

"Knowing this first..."—and that statement in verse 20, "knowing this first," means that this is of utmost importance. This is a primary, important point.—"...that no prophecy of the Scripture..."—or "no Scripture"—"...is of any private interpretation..."—why?—"...because prophecy came not in old time by the will of man..."—so it wasn't their own ideas or their own thoughts. It didn't come by their own will—"...but when men of God spoke as they were moved..."—or "carried" or "borne along." It's a nautical term. It's used of wind filling the sails of a sailboat and carrying it over the sea. When they are carried along or borne along—"...by the Holy Spirit."

Now let's look at these affirmations he makes. First of all, in verse 19, Scripture is a shining light. The world's getting darker, but God's Word shines brighter. So men die, God's Word lives. Experience fades, God's Word stands true. The world is getting darker, God's Word shines brighter.

I love Psalm 119:105. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and..."—what?—"...a light unto my path." It's always been one of my favorite verses. I remember years ago I was on an airplane flying somewhere, and you know how they have those little magazines in the pouch in front of you where you buy all kinds of stupid stuff? And I just trip out looking through all these crazy inventions that people come up with. Some of them I like. "Man, why didn't I invent that? I'd be rich right now." But I'll never forget; I saw these house slippers that had lights in the toes. Little battery-pack light slippers. And when you get up at night and you're walking, you have headlights on your feet. And they kind of light your way. And the minute I saw them, I thought of that scripture, "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." These are Biblical slippers. I really wanted to buy the things, but they only came in pink. I think my wife would like that. I said, "Forget it." Little fuzzy things, you know. They had these lights. I thought, "How cool!" When you get up at night, you got your headlights going, you know.

But I thank God for His Word. All these years that I've been a Christian, all these years that I've been a pastor—and sometimes you don't know which way to go, what to say, what to do, and then I open the Bible and God's Word lights my path. And when this world gets darker and darker and darker, we need the light of God's Word for our marriages, for our families, for our churches, for our community, for our nation.

Oh, how my heart aches for the United States right now. We need God's Word so badly. That's the greatest need in America today. The greatest need in the United States is for us to return back to God and back to His Word. You can't govern a nation without God and the Bible. I believe that the Bible made America. And the reason America is great is because America is good—good in the sense of God's standards. We need laws that reflect God's Word.

And when you vote in a couple of weeks, you need to think about abortion and the Supreme Court and the other moral issues. It's not tit for tat, who is the better person, or who has the worst sins. It's policies we need to think about. We need to think about the unborn in the womb, and protection of life in the womb and God's Word in the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not murder." It's as black and white as it can be. And we need God's Word. We need a light and a lamp in this culture and this age. We don't know what marriage is anymore. We can't even define marriage. We've opened the floodgate of iniquity. "God, bring us back to your Word"; it's a lamp, a light shining in a dark place.

But secondly I want you to notice that the Scriptures are Spirit given. Now verses 20 and 21 is one of two of the most important texts in the New Testament on the subject of inspiration. The other one is 2 Timothy 3:16. These are the two most important texts in the New Testament about the Word of God. So Scripture, number one, is a shining light. Scripture, number two, is Spirit given. I want you to notice it in verse 20. "Knowing this first..."—or "of utmost importance"—"...that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." What does that mean? Does that mean that we can't read the Bible and interpret it? No, that's not what it means.

Sadly, in big segments of the Christian church they've taught that for years. Back in the Dark Ages, they take a Bible—it was chained to the pulpit, and no one could read it except the priests. Do you know that tomorrow is the 500th anniversary when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg that began the Protestant Reformation? Five hundred years ago, the Protestant Reformation began. And central to that movement was that the Bible needs to be in the hands of everyday, ordinary people. Free the Word of God up and put it in the hearts of people and the world has changed. If it weren't for that Protestant Reformation, we'd still be in the Dark Ages. And the Word of God brought that light, brought that liberty. So many of the social blessings we have and the standards of our western society today all can be traced back to the Bible. Without it, we have nothing. We're like a ship without a compass or a sail. We're lost in the dark of night without any map.

But we need to understand that the Word of God can be read and understood. That's not what he is saying. Some say, "Well, private interpretation means you can't take a text and isolate it from other texts," that that single text must be interpreted with other texts. You can't privately or individually interpret it. I agree with that, but I don't think that's what that verse is saying. I don't believe that's what Peter is saying. You say, "Well, what do you think Peter is saying?" Read the next verse. It starts with a "for." So this is the reason or the explanation for verse 20. Verse 21 says, "For the prophecy..."—or "the Scripture"—"...came not in old time by the will of man..."—in other words, when holy men wrote the Scriptures, it wasn't coming from their own ideas, their own interpretation, their own thoughts.—"...but..."—the contrast, verse 21—"...holy men of God spoke as they were moved..."—the word means "carried along" or "borne along"—"...by the Holy Spirit."

So what is Peter saying when he says "no private interpretation"? He says that when the human authors wrote the Scripture, they weren't writing them out of their own ideas. You ever have people say, "Oh, you believe the Bible?" "Yeah, I believe the Bible." "Well, it was written by

men. How can you believe a book that was just written by men?" Yes, it was written by men, but here's what Peter says. "They were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The same Greek word "moved" there is used in the book of Acts when they hoisted a sail and the wind filled the sail and carried the ship over the water. So it means that God superintended the human authors, so that using their own personalities, they composed and recorded without error the very words of Scripture in the original autographs. And I'm going to give you the definition in just a second that you need to grab hold of. But I believe that God was carrying them along.

Now let me bring up some important points from these verses here in Peter. First of all, the Bible is a revelation of and from God, verse 20 and 21. It doesn't come from man. Its origin is from God. You say, "Well, John, you just admitted the Bible was written by men." "Yes, but they were superintended by God. They were carried along by God." When Paul tells Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration," he used the word "pneuma," which means "breath" or "air." So God "breathed," and in the Greek it means God "breathed out." He didn't breath in. He breathed out Scripture. So God was carrying them, God was breathing on them. And the very words they wrote were the words of God.

Now here's the deal: When they were writing, God allowed their own personality. He allowed the old historical event. And He's writing to the different churches. Paul was writing. But He made sure every word he wrote was His Word. But the point I want to make is that its origin is not man, it's God; the idea that God cannot be known apart from revelation. God reveals Himself in His Word.

And secondly, the Bible is given by inspiration of God. At the end of verse 21, "But holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." This is why I quoted you 2 Timothy 3:16. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."—or it is "God breathed"—"...and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness."

Now this is where I want to stop for just a moment, and I want you to put your thinking caps on. I want you to listen for just a moment to me very carefully. What exactly do we mean by "inspiration"? Christians for centuries have said, "I believe in the inspired Word of God." Do we mean natural inspiration like Shakespeare? I can read Shakespeare and go, "It's so inspired." I can listen to music and say, "Oh, it was so inspiring." I can watch a drama or a play and say, "It was so inspiring." Do we mean natural inspiration? No, it's not natural inspiration. It's divine inspiration.

And we don't mean dictation or mechanical inspiration. You know that God didn't actually say, "Paul, get your pen out. Write to the Philippians, 'Dearly beloved.'" "Dearly beloved." He didn't tell them word for word, dictate what they were supposed to write down. Nor was Paul sitting in prison or house arrest, and he's sitting there talking to Silas, and all at once his arms started to move. "Whoa! Silas, check it out. Something's going on here." And then his arm grabs the pen. "Whoa! Look at that! I got a pen. Look at that. I'm writing to the Philippians. Oh, that's good stuff!" You know, we have people who do "spirit writing." They go into a little room and go [writing], and they let the spirit lead them. "I'm going to write to them." Who knows what the

heck they're writing. It's not mechanical dictation.

Nor is it conceptual inspiration. Some people say, "Yeah, the Bible's given by inspiration of God, but only the concepts in the Bible." How do you convey concepts without words? If the actual words aren't inspired, how can the concepts be inspired?

I believe that inspiration is to be defined as the very words, and every word is given by inspiration of God. This is what scholars call "verbal plenary inspiration." "Verbal" meaning the words. "Plenary" meaning all of them. So I believe the orthodox view of inspiration is that the very words in your Bible, and all of the words, are given by inspiration of God.

Now let's put that definition up on the screen by Charles Ryrie. It's been one of my favorites for years. And I want you to follow with me. "Inspiration is God's superintendence of the human authors of Scripture, so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs." Now that's always been one of my favorite definitions of inspiration, and I put it to memory. You can actually take every phrase of that definition and kind of break it down. So God superintended human authors.

Do you know that the Bible, like Jesus, has two natures? Jesus is both man and God. One person, two full natures; fully God, fully man. One person, Jesus Christ. That's why He's so mind blowing when you study the life of Christ, because He was both man and divine. Guess what? The Bible has two natures. It was written by men, in history, in a geographical location. You ever notice that when the Bible is opened it doesn't say, "A long, long time ago in a far away land." Did you ever notice how specific the Bible is?

I remember my first trip to Israel and the night we got to Jerusalem, I opened my Bible in my hotel and saw the word "Jerusalem" in my Bible and thought, "I'm here. There's a real Jerusalem." And then I was reading about the Garden of Gethsemane, and the pastor I was with said, "Let's go down there right now." We jammed out of the hotel, went to the Garden of Gethsemane. And I saw the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. I saw Mount Carmel and I said, "It's real!" Everything you read in the Bible—you can get in an airplane, fly to Israel and it's there. And every time an archeologist unearths something it confirms the Word of God, or the Word of God confirms the archeological discovery.

So it has history, it has geography, it has a language, it has grammar, it has poetry, it has prophecy, it has different kinds of literature. Some of the biggest mistakes people make when they are interpreting the Bible is they forget to ask themselves, "What is the context? What is the setting? Who was it written to? What's the history? What's the geography? What kind of literature is it? Is it poetic? Is it historic? Is it didactic? Is it prophetic? What kind of literature am I interpreting here?" You can't just read into the Bible and make it whatever you want it to mean. People do that all the time. So the Bible has a human side. So when you study the Bible, put your thinking cap on. Study geography. Study history. Study the grammar of the Scriptures. Study the background and the setting; who wrote to whom, why they wrote and

what was going on, historical events. Look up the Sea of Galilee. Learn about its size and what it is. The Mediterranean Sea and Lebanon and all the geography. Study the Bible with your brains.

You can't just open the Bible [reading], "God, speak to me. Whew, I'm having an experience." I'm sorry; I can't help getting a little weird on this subject. I've seen so much stupidity when it comes to the Bible. Flipping through the Bible, stick your finger on it saying, "God, speak to me." You look up the verse and it says, "Judas went out and hanged himself." "Lord, not that one for today. Lord, not that one for today. Give me something really good, Lord."

You know, you have to use your brain when you study the Bible; okay? Because it was written by men, but—here's where it gets good—it was written by inspiration of God. And only God the Holy Spirit can give you illumination and produce transformation of your life. So get on your knees and pray to God the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding into the things of God in the Word of God. When I read the morning newspaper, I don't get on my knees and pray, "God, please show me, teach me, open my eyes. Show me the things of you, Lord." That's just a newspaper. But when I read the Bible, I have to put my thinking cap on, and I have to get on my knees and pray, because it has two natures: one is divine and one is human. So we have to think and we have to depend on God the Holy Spirit to give us illumination and transformation. So the origin of Scripture is a revelation of God.

But I also want you to know that the Bible, thirdly, is inerrant. Now what do I mean by that word "inerrant"? Inerrancy means it is without error. You say, "Pastor John, did we really hear you just say that?" "Yes, you did." The Bible is inerrant. Now, again, it's a whole subject, but let me make these points. Number one, the Bible is the Word of God. Number two, God cannot lie or make an error. The conclusion? Therefore, the Bible does not err.

One of the most popular movements in the church today is to believe in an inspired Bible but not in an inerrant Bible. A lot of people who claim to be evangelical Christians don't hold to this truth. And it's dangerous, dangerous, dangerous, dangerous, dangerous. "Well, I don't believe that God really, literally created in six days the heavens and the earth. And I don't really believe there was an actual Adam. I believe it was just a figure of speech or a myth or just something that symbolizes something. It wasn't a real Adam." If there wasn't a real Adam, then there wasn't a real fall. And if there wasn't a real fall, then there's no real sin. And if there's no real sin, then there's no need of a real Savior.

Everything we hold precious and dear in the Gospel of Jesus Christ has a foundation in the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis. And there's nothing wrong with science, and I don't believe the Bible is unscientific or contradicts science. I believe the Bible is God's revelation. Ask a scientist who believes in billions of years of evolution and that there was a big bang and we've evolved. Ask him, "Were you there?" "No." You either believe in some form of eternal, all-existent matter, or you believe in eternal God, Who created the heavens and the earth. It all had to start somewhere. There was a big bang. How did the big bang happen? What banged the big bang? I mean, they just have to take a leap that from nothing came something. How

does from nothing comes something?

They go, "Well, you Christians just believe that God just came into existence." No, no, no, no, no. We believe that God is eternal. God has always been. "Well, I can't wrap my head around that." That's because you have a pea brain. That's because God is infinite and you're finite. And I'm glad that God is bigger than my brain. If He were small enough for my brain, He couldn't be big enough for my needs. So I believe in an eternal God that created all matter, and He created the heavens and the earth and He made Adam and Eve. And I believe the first 11 chapters of Genesis are literal. I believe in a literal six days of creation. You go, "You believe all this happened in six days?" Is anything too hard for God? God, with His omnipotent power, could speak the heavens and the earth into existence. It amazes me.

Now here's the problem: If the Bible has mistakes and the Bible can't be trusted, or geography, or history, or science, then how do we know it can be trusted spiritually? If God said "Oops!" or God made an error, how do we know? What happens is that the authority shifts from the Bible to you. You become the authority. You say, "This is of God. This isn't of God." We have the Jesus seminar where they're ripping out large portions of what Jesus taught. They say, "Jesus would never teach that. That's really not in the Bible. Let's rip it out." So they become the authority and not the Word of God. So what happens is, if you think there're any errors in the Bible, the authority just shifted from the Bible to you. You become the authority, and you decide what is true and what isn't true. And that's very, very, very dangerous. We need to be under the authority of Scripture, not over the Scripture, imposing our ideas and our concepts on the Word of God. And this is the rock. This is the solid rock on which we stand, the Bible.

So I would close with these questions. Are you a wise or foolish builder? Are you building on the rock of Scripture or on sinking sand? What about your marriage? Is it built on the Word of God? What about all your relationships? You're young and you're single and you're dating, or you're looking for a spouse; are you reading God's Word? Are you filtering everything through the lens of Scripture? Are you thinking Biblically? What about your job? When you go to work tomorrow morning and how you work—what's your philosophy of work? Is it Biblical? Are you thinking Biblically? Everything we see we must view through the lens of Scripture. When we watch something on TV, we should be watching it through the lens of Scripture. When we watch a movie, when we listen to music, when we talk to people—everything we think and everything we see, we should be thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking Biblically and living Biblically. That's building your house upon the rock of Scripture.

Someone once said—and I loved it—"To give the Bible its rightful place is to bring health to the church, light to the world and glory to God." When we as individuals, when I as a pastor, when we as a church give the Bible its rightful place, we bring health to the church, we bring light to the world and we bring glory to God. May God help us to build our lives, our ministry, our church, our family and our nation on His unchanging Word. Amen.