

Something More Sure

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 October 2023

Preacher: Colin Horne

[0 : 00] Well, last week we began this study on the doctrine of the Word of God. And so this is a study on what the Bible teaches us about the Bible.

And our main kind of framework for this, our guide for this study, is Kevin DeYoung's book, Taking God at His Word.

And so last week we began our study. Today we considered together chapter 1 of this book. And as DeYoung explained, the first chapter is really the conclusion of the study.

It is the goal of the study. That is that we would have hearts that are warmed with deep love and affection and adoration for God and for His Word.

And that's what we see in Psalm 119, is the psalmist is overwhelmed and just so incredibly thankful for God's Word.

[1 : 02] So DeYoung says, we want that. By God's Spirit, we want to have that same kind of warm affection for the Word. So how do we get there? Well, that's what the rest of this book is unpacking.

And it is by having a thoroughly biblical understanding of the Bible. It is having an understanding of all that the Bible says about what it is.

So we're going to begin to unpack the doctrine of the Word of God this morning. And so that first doctrine of the Word of God, the first bit that we're going to unpack, is the doctrine of inspiration as well as the doctrine of inerrancy.

So this is chapter 2. And this chapter in DeYoung's book is entitled, Something More Sure.

Something More Sure. So the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy.

These are our two very closely related doctrines. Inspiration is the idea that the Scriptures are divinely inspired. That they are, as 2 Timothy 3.16 says, God-breathed.

[2 : 13] And inerrancy is the doctrine that the Scriptures have no errors. Now, if we took it another step further and we talked about infallibility, that's the idea that it is impossible for the Scriptures to have errors.

And because it's impossible, then they obviously don't. Therefore, the Scriptures are inerrant. They contain no errors. So this chapter, it unpacks those two doctrines.

Now, many people would say, many people would say that they want to hear from God. It would be such an incredible experience if God would speak directly to me.

DeYoung poses this as a question. He asks, can you imagine God speaking to you personally, certainly, authoritatively?

Then DeYoung answers that question by saying this, well, the good news is that every single one of us can hear from God today, right now, at this very moment.

[3 : 21] God still speaks. And He has a word for us that is sure, steady, and unerring. And the proof of this we find in 2 Peter 1.

So turn there with me to 2 Peter 1. Now, before we read our passage together and learn from it, we want to really quickly summarize what 2 Peter is about.

So 2 Peter is a letter that was written to address a problem. And that's how most, many at least, of the letters in the New Testament are written. They are written to address a particular problem, particularly oftentimes false teaching that is creeping into the church.

2 Peter is similar in this vein. 2 Peter is written to encourage and to exhort Christians to persevere in the faith because false teaching was creeping into their midst that was discouraging them from continuing in the faith.

And so Peter is writing to say, continue to live godly lives because the return of Christ is sure. Now, he's writing this because there were those that were teaching and that were saying Christ isn't going to return.

[4 : 39] He's not coming back. And so you can live however you like. We're not concerned with his return. We can live however we like.

They were saying things like this. Where is the promise of his second coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.

So they were teaching that the return of Christ is not going to happen. Therefore, don't worry about judgment. Don't worry about what's going to happen when you stand before the throne of God because Christ isn't coming.

Live however you like. And Peter is teaching in his letter that this is not true. Christ is going to return. And Peter is saying he can prove it.

So he is going to give us two pieces of evidence. DeYoung unpacks these two in his chapter. Eyewitness testimony and authoritative documents. So two pieces of evidence that even today are often used in court.

[5 : 44] They prove whether a claim is true or false often in courts using eyewitness testimony, authoritative documents. So let's read our passage together.

Beginning in verse 16, we're going to read through the end of the chapter. 2 Peter 1 verse 16, this is the word of the Lord. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So let's consider the first piece of evidence together, eyewitness testimony.

[7 : 10] Now in Peter's letter, he is making reference to a very particular event, an event that he was there for. He got to witness with his very own eyes.

And that event is the transfiguration of Christ on the mountaintop. You can read of that in the gospel accounts. Luke 9 describes for us what transpired upon this mountain.

And this is where Jesus revealed himself in all of his glory. This is where Jesus was giving his disciples this glimpse into his second coming, into his return.

When he comes again, he's going to come in all of his glory. And this was a glimpse of that. Just a moment in time when Peter saw him and he was dazzling white.

His face was altered. He was in his glory. So Peter is saying, we saw him. We didn't just believe what other people had told us.

[8 : 13] We weren't just believing the talk about Jesus in the marketplaces. We weren't just believing about Jesus based on what people were saying at the docks while we were fishing.

Verse 16 begins with these words, for we did not follow cleverly devised myths, or your translation might say stories. They weren't tricked by other people.

It's like Peter saying, we weren't duped into buying the as seen on TV product for 1995 where you're guaranteed a second product with the purchase of one.

We weren't duped into that. What we heard was with our own ears. What we saw was with our own eyes. We were there with Christ.

Eyewitnesses to this glimpse of his second coming. Listen to what he says. He says, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He says, we heard the Father say, this is my Son, whom I love.

[9 : 15] With him I am well pleased. So Peter is making a very clear point here. Christianity is grounded in historical facts.

Christianity is grounded in historical reality. Not in myths like the Greeks and Romans. Where myths oftentimes, they were known to be made up.

But they kind of made sense of the world for people. And so people would continue to perpetuate those myths. These aren't stories. These aren't myths. Historical facts.

And Peter is not the only one in Scripture who says this. Consider the very opening of Luke's gospel account. How does Luke's gospel account begin? Listen to these words from Luke chapter 1 verse 1.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, To write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, That you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught.

[10 : 35] So Luke was being meticulous in his writing. He said, I heard from eyewitnesses, And I wrote down this very orderly account for you.

He took the time with the details, Because the details reflected what had actually happened. These were accounts that it seems his readers could go back and kind of try to verify.

Is what we're hearing really true? And he's saying, Yeah, you can check my work here. I've followed all things closely for some time past. I'm writing an orderly account for you.

Or listen to the way that John's gospel account ends. So we hear how Luke's begins and near the end of John's gospel account. John says this in chapter 20 verse 31.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, Which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, The Son of God, And that by believing you may have life in His name.

[11 : 41] So he again, he now references what is historical. Jesus did other signs in the presence of disciples. People saw this. They were witnesses of it.

But I'm not just giving you, I'm not spinning you a tail here. Or how about the preaching and the teaching of the early church? How did the early disciples, how did the apostles, How did they present the gospel, Especially to their Jewish brothers and sisters?

They grounded it in the reality of Christ's death and His resurrection. They didn't talk about just kind of some experience that you could have with God. They said, no, what we're talking about is grounded in Jesus' death and His resurrection.

Listen to how Peter himself, who wrote 2 Peter, Listen to how Peter preaches in Acts chapter 2 beginning in verse 29. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, That he both died and was buried, And his tomb is with us to this day.

So he begins here by talking about somebody that clearly lived and died. Somebody that was not mythological. The Jewish people didn't think of David as just kind of a good story, A bedtime story to tell your kids.

[13 : 00] This was somebody that everybody was like, Yeah, David lived, David died. Okay? Real person. Being therefore a prophet, that's David, And knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him That he would set one of his descendants on his throne, He foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, That he was not abandoned to Hades, Nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up. And of all that, we are witnesses. So we see it in the gospel accounts. We see it in the early church.

You find it in the letters, like 2 Peter as well. All of these examples of the biblical authors making this point. Christianity is tied to history. So that's the first piece of evidence that Peter uses To convince his readers, Christ is coming again.

Grounded in history. Let's consider the second piece of evidence. Authoritative documents. Now we see this also in 2 Peter.

So what are these documents? Well, Peter is going to show us That they are none other than the very scriptures themselves. Now for Peter, at this time, What he has is the Old Testament.

[14 : 20] So he is referencing the Old Testament. And he is especially referencing prophecies in the Old Testament. But that is not to say that only that is what he has in mind When he is giving these authoritative documents.

All of scripture is the authoritative documents. So DeYoung says this, You cannot put more confidence in your Bible Than Peter put in his.

And so we are going to see here three truths About the nature of scripture That 2 Peter chapter 1 teaches us. So here is the first truth about the nature of scripture.

Scripture is the word of God. That might seem kind of obvious. Yes, scripture is the word of God. But Peter here is helping us to see That we are talking about what is written down Is the word of God.

That which has been written. So here is how this is unpacked. Some people think That God's word isn't necessarily the text of the Bible.

[15 : 30] So some people will say That God's word is contained in the Bible. So something in here is God's word. But the human authors were writing more than just God's word.

God has certain things in here That are inspired, breathed out by him. But they wouldn't say that All of the scripture is God's word. So they would say God's word is contained in the scriptures. Or they might say that the Bible It becomes God's word as we embrace it. So until we have faith It's actually not the word of God.

But as we believe it then becomes the word of God. Okay? Those are two ways that people have thought about the scriptures. Peter is teaching us that's not the case.

That's not how this works. Peter helps us to see God's authority resides in the written text. Not in our experience of it.

[16 : 33] Not in our interpretation of it. Not in oral traditions. Or in a speech event like the preaching even. But in the text itself.

It's the text of scripture that is inspired. Well how does Peter do this for us? How does he teach us this? Well look what he says over and over again.

He uses the word prophecy. We see it. I believe it's three different times in our text. We have the prophetic word he says. He also talks about no prophecy ever produced by the will of man.

And then in verse 20 he says The prophecy of scripture. He says no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

So he doesn't just say prophecy to talk about anything that anybody says that might be considered forth telling. He's not just saying anybody can get up and just say I heard from God.

[17 : 36] No he's saying prophecy. That is true prophecy. Found in scripture. All prophecy found in scripture. And that word scripture is really important.

The term that is translated scripture simply means writing. It speaks of something that has been written down. So what is inspired is prophecy of scripture.

All the writings of the Old Testament are in view here. All that God has given to us is authoritative. Perhaps your translation says something completely reliable.

Verse 19. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed. Or your translation may say completely reliable.

So that's what is inspired. What's inspired is the written text of the word. The very words themselves. Now if we're only thinking about this in terms of intellectual knowledge.

[18 : 43] We want to also recognize how does it change our lives. But what does he tell us to do with it? What does Peter tell us to do with these completely reliable authoritative documents?

Peter says pay attention to them. Pay attention to them. Like a light shining in a dark place. That should remind us of Psalm 119.

That should take us back to the psalmist. What does the psalmist even say in that text? He says your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

And so why is it that this word is a shining light to guide us? Because it's a word given to us by God. It's breathed out by him.

It is special. It is unique. It is divine. That is why it is our guide. So the doctrine of inspiration. It doesn't just impact how we think and understand the Bible.

[19 : 46] It impacts how we live. Because the Bible is God's word. We pay attention to it. We live in obedience to it. So de Young says this.

The goal of revelation is not information only, but affection, worship, and obedience. Christ in us will be realized only as we drink deeply of the Bible, which is God's word outside of us.

So that's the first truth about Scripture that we learn from this text. Scripture is the word of God. Scripture is the word of God. It is objective revelation.

It is inspired and it is the text that is inspired. Here's the second truth. The word of God is no less divine because it's given through human instrumentality.

So the Scripture is no less divine because it was written by human hands. Now Peter helps us to see this. Look at how Peter describes the way in which Scripture was written.

[20 : 54] Verse 21. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will. But prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So they're carried along by the Holy Spirit. That word there that we have translated as carried, perhaps it's also translated in this text as born.

It means that the outcome is certain. Men were carried along by the Holy Spirit to the exact end that God desired.

Listen to how B.B. Warfield puts it. And he describes the translation as born. Okay, so he says this. The term here used is a very specific one.

What is born is taken up by the bearer and conveyed by the bearer's power. Not its own. To the bearer's goal. Not its own.

[21 : 56] So the men who spoke from God are here declared, therefore, to have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by His power to the goal of His choosing.

The things which they spoke under this operation of the Spirit were, therefore, His things, not theirs. And that is the reason which is assigned why the prophetic word is sure.

Though spoken through the instrumentality of men, it is by virtue of the fact that these men spoke as born by the Holy Spirit, an immediately divine word.

So what we have in our Bibles is exactly what God intended to be written down through human authors. The men who wrote the Bible didn't ensure that.

They didn't make sure that they got everything God wanted for them to write down. God made sure of that. He bore them along. He carried them along so that they wrote exactly what He wanted.

[22 : 58] I mentioned last week that we'd be using our confession of faith to better understand the doctrine of the Word. That we would also use this exposition of the confession. Well, this is from that exposition.

John Ruther wrote the chapter on this. And he says, Men spoke, but the origination was from God's Spirit as He bore them in His providence.

So the Bible is both a human book and a divine book. And there's no conflict in that. DeYoung says, God used the intellect, skills, and personality of fallible men to write down what was divine and infallible.

So God used men to write what was divine. God used men who were fallible to write what was infallible. And if that seems hard for us to grasp, a parallel idea would be to consider the nature of Christ.

Christ is both fully God and fully man. And yet, Jesus is no less divine because He is human.

[24 : 10] In the same way, the Bible is no less divine because God used humans to write it. Alright, and that brings us then to our third truth that Peter teaches us.

Truth number three is, The Bible is without errors. The Bible is without errors. So, kind of building off of the last point.

Some people will take issue with the idea that the Bible is the Word of God because it was written by men. And sinful men. Men who, we have evidence in the Bible itself, they sinned.

We see that with Peter. He was guilty of much sin. And so people will think, How is it if sinful men who obviously err wrote the Bible, how can we be sure that the Bible is without errors?

In fact, it would lend itself for us to believe more likely that it does have errors. Peter's answer. Because no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

[25 : 18] So this is driving at the doctrine of inerrancy. Inerrancy simply means without error. And it goes hand in hand with inspiration. If we believe in the doctrine of inspiration, then it makes sense that we also believe in the doctrine of inerrancy.

If a perfect God divinely authored the Scriptures, then it is reasonable to conclude that those Scriptures are perfectly written and contain no errors.

A God who makes no mistakes gives us His Word without any mistakes. Listen to how John Calvin describes this doctrine, as John Calvin can only say.

We must believe the Bible, and he says, as the indubitable oracles of God, because they have not emanated from men's own private suggestions. The indubitable oracles.

Unquestionable truth. Truth. That is what the Bible is. The oracles of God. Because the Bible came from God, and not from man.

[26 : 27] Or as de Young says much more concisely, the ideas did not spring forth from the confused mind of men. So if we think about this in the negative, if the Bible is not inspired, then it is certainly not inerrant either.

If the Bible is not divinely inspired, then it is the product of the confused mind of men, and we have no reason to be gathered here this morning to be learning of the Word, to then sit under the preaching of the Word, because it's really just another book, and we have to figure out for ourselves

what truth is and what truth isn't.

No, that's not the case at all. The Bible teaches that it is indeed divinely inspired. Now that has a very practical ramification for us.

Very practical consequence. Something that is going to drive home how we think, how we live, how we look at the Bible. Here it is.

This is what de Young says. The Word of God always stands over us, and we never stand over the Word of God.

[27 : 41] When we reject inerrancy, we put ourselves in judgment over God's Word. We claim the right to determine which parts of God's revelation can be trusted and which cannot.

You may have heard C.S. Lewis say something very similar. He spoke of this idea of putting God in the dock, or putting God on trial.

And so man will come to the Word and say, you know what, God, we're going to put you on trial here, and we're going to stand in judgment over what your Word says, rather than properly recognizing that we are the ones, if any, who are on trial.

That God has us standing before Him, and we are then standing in judgment apart from Christ. We mistakenly put God on trial when it is ourselves that ought to be on trial.

We place ourselves over the Word of God, and we do what Adam and Eve did. We say, you know what, actually, God, you're not in charge. I'm in charge.

[28 : 53] You're not God. I want to be God. Now, here's a very vivid example that perhaps you've heard of. The Jesus Seminar. This took place, like, 25 years ago, probably, somewhere in that range.

And it was a group of, quote, scholars who gathered together, and their sole purpose for gathering was to determine, what did Jesus actually say?

Now, we hear that, and it's, like, kind of confusing. What do you mean, what did Jesus actually say? Well, because they didn't believe that all that the Bible says is actually God's Word. So they read the Gospel accounts, and they don't take it for what it is.

They don't say, this is all that Jesus said. We have it written right here. They took it, and they said, some of this is the ideas of men. Some of this is man's own insertion of what they would like for Jesus to have said.

And some of it Jesus did actually say. So their purpose was, we're going to figure out what Jesus said. So they had this whole elaborate system involving these beads, and they would use these beads to cast votes as to whether or not Jesus did or didn't say something.

[30 : 07] So here's how the system went. A red bead indicated that the voter believed Jesus did say whatever is being quoted. They are certain that Jesus said it.

They, they're, yep, he said that. We're sure of it. So that's my red bead. It's worth three points. They even had points. All kinds of interesting things. Now here's the pink bead. The pink bead indicated that Jesus probably said this.

I'm not as certain, so I don't, I'm not using my red bead here. I'm going to use my pink bead on this one. Then they had a gray bead, and the gray bead said, I don't think that Jesus said this.

And that was worth one point. The black bead. There is no way that Jesus said this. What do you think were the kinds of things that got the black bead?

Anything that had to do with hell? Anything that had to do with condemnation? Anything that had to do with the divinity of Christ? What do you think was getting the red beads?

[31 : 08] The things that naturally maybe feel better, like God saying things that, like God is love. You know, the idea that God loves, love your enemy. Jesus said that. But did Jesus say that if you don't turn from your sins, you're going to go to a place where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth?

No way that Jesus would say that. So that sounds ridiculous, but if you reject the doctrine of inspiration, that's what we're doing here. We're casting our beads and pretending that we have some kind of say in what the Word of God is or isn't.

You'll pick and choose what you want to believe in the Bible. DeYoung points this out. If we deny that the Bible is completely trustworthy, then we must accept one of two conclusions.

Either Scripture is not all from God, that's what the Jesus seminar was doing. This clearly isn't all from God. Or we have to conclude that God is not altogether dependable, that we can't trust Him.

We would do well to heed the words that the Lord spoke to Job in Job 42. Shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty?

[32 : 22] That just means who is going to show God that He's wrong? DeYoung points out that if we deny inspiration, we're committing the sin of unbelief.

He writes, finding a halfway house where some things in the Bible are true and other things, as we have judged them, are not, is an impossibility.

This kind of compromised Christianity, besides flying in the face of the Bible's own self-understanding, does not satisfy the soul or present to the lost the sort of God they need to meet.

If we think back to the writer of Psalm 119, can you imagine the writer of Psalm 119 with anything less than a robust, full, complete understanding of the doctrine of inspiration?

Of course not. He makes his position clear. Here's his position on the inspiration of the Word of God, shotgun style. With my lips, I declare all the rules of your mouth.

[33 : 32] All your commandments are sure, but you are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are true. My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right.

Not some. Not the ones that the psalmist decided were the Word of God. All. All of it. So do you want to share in the psalmist's joy and delight?

And do you want that for others? Then we must, as J.I. Packer says, make much of the entire trustworthiness, that is the inerrancy of Holy Scripture, as the inspired and liberating Word of God. So three truths that were taught to us from 2 Peter. In this passage, it helps us to have a proper understanding of inspiration and inerrancy.

The Bible is, indeed, a divine book. It is something completely reliable. DeYoung says, there is no more authoritative declaration than what we find in the Word of God.

[34 : 45] No firmer ground to stand on. No more final argument that can be spoken after Scripture has spoken. In other words, Scripture speaks and it drops the mic.

We're done. Everything that needs to be said, it's been said with the Scriptures. And so when we have this high view of the Word, then we will appreciate all the more what God says to us in it. We won't think, I wish that God would speak to me. How wonderful would it be if He would speak to me. Instead, we will rejoice as we say, He has spoken.

He continues to speak through His Word. I'll finish with this quote from DeYoung. You do not need another special revelation from God outside the Bible.

You can listen to the voice of God every day. Christ still speaks because the Spirit has already spoken. If you want to hear from God, go to the book that records only what He has said.

[35 : 51] Immerse yourself in the Word of God. You will find nothing more sure. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we confess that we do.

We do often commit the sin of unbelief. There are times in which we question, is this what You said? At least, I have found that in my own heart.

When we find it difficult to submit and obey, we pray, Lord, that You would give us a high view of Your Word. That You would help us to embrace all that it says about itself.

That indeed, it is breathed out by You. We pray, Lord, that then in light of that, we would live in submission to it, in humility to it. help us to that end put to death in us the sin of unbelief.

Keep us from that, we pray, Lord, and help us to wholeheartedly embrace Your Word. All that You have said, all of Your commandments, we find to be sweet like the honeycomb.

[37 : 02] We thank You for Your Word. What a privilege it is that we could sit under the preaching and the teaching of it, that we can have it in our homes, that we can read it, that we can learn of it by Your Spirit.

We pray, Lord, that You would give us thankful hearts, that You would help us to see what a privilege indeed it is. Give us that high view of Scripture, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.