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THE WORD



GLORY OF THE  
LORD

2 PETER 1.12-21

# THE WORD MORE SURE

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**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*A ReVision Resource*

The Word More Sure: 2 Peter 1.12-21  
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## 2 Peter 1.12-21: Introduction

Peter knew his time was running short. His day of departing was near, and he wanted to do everything he could to make sure the believers he cared about so much would be able to remember and grow in the grace of the Lord after he was gone.

So he wrote to them. Peter understood the power of words, especially those words which teach the very Word of God. The Scriptures are given by God, His Spirit working in faithful prophets and apostles to record the Lord's will for His people. This Word is more sure than even the most startling, amazing, life-changing experience we could ever imagine.

So we need to dwell in this Word and let it be our guide for a life of serving others, just as Peter had done.

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1 and 2 Peter can encourage, embolden, and instruct us, if we're willing to take the Apostle's words to heart. My prayer is that all who take up this study will do just that. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 A Needful Reminder

*2 Peter 1.12<sup>12</sup>*

*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.*

**The Story:** I can't think of more than a handful of books that I've ever read more than once. There are some, but not many. I've gained what the author had for me, and it's time to move on to other subjects and writers.

You can never say this about the Word of God. Peter understood that the people he was writing to were solid Christians. They were persevering through persecution, unlike certain of those to whom the book of Hebrews was written.

These people loved Jesus, although they'd never seen Him (1 Pet. 1.8); they'd separated themselves from their former sinful ways of life (1 Pet. 4.3-5); and now they were enduring hardship and persecution because they meant business with Jesus (1 Pet. 4.12-19). Nevertheless, Peter understood how easy it is to become distracted from seeking the Lord or diverted to another path than that to which He has called us.

In the same way, Christians need to make continuous resort to Scripture, for we can never plumb the depth of God's Word; and we must encourage one another to press on in doing good and bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (Heb. 10.24; 2 Cor. 7.1). Let us always look for ways to build one another up through encouragement, exhortation, admonition, and reminder.

**The Structure:** Both Jesus and Paul warned that Christians can expect to know trial and persecution as we take up the calling of discipleship and pursue the work of reconciliation and restoration appropriate to our times. We are stronger when we work together as a community, a movement of like-minded, mutually edifying brethren, following trusted leaders who are helping us to stay grounded in the Word of God and focused on Jesus Christ.

We must never tire of being reminded of our calling and the promises of God, and we must never fail to encourage one another whenever we can. Knowing what the Lord expects of us, and drawing on the resources of His Word and Spirit, let us offer one another timely reminders of our calling in the life of faith and the mission of making all things new.

*Whom can you encourage in his or her walk with the Lord today?*

## 2 Minister While You Can

*2 Peter 1.13, 14*

<sup>13</sup>Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, <sup>14</sup>knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

**The Story:** Moses prayed that God would teach him to number his days, so that he might have the wisdom of God for the work he'd been given to do (Ps. 90.12, 16, 17). Paul urged us to make the most of all the time God entrusts to us (Eph. 5.15-17). This is what we see Peter doing here. By some means he has come to know that his death is imminent. The Lord, he says, has made that clear.

But this is no time for a pity party, or for sitting around waiting for others to come and minister to him. Peter knew his time was short, and he determined to reach out to the people he knew and loved, to encourage and edify them in their time of need, and, in the process, leave a letter that Christians for 2,000 years have found to be a source of counsel, instruction, and encouragement.

Are we making the most of our days for ministry to others? Or do we consume our time on ourselves only, or wait for others to reach out to us? Peter's example is instructive: While we have strength, let us live for God and reach out to others in his name.

**The Structure:** God calls His people to become equipped for ministry, so that by their good works they may be used to build the Church in unity and maturity (Eph. 4.11-16). In too many churches, most people simply wait around for someone to minister to them. Such people may complain when they don't get the kind of ministry they think they need. But it seems hardly ever to occur to them to give themselves to others like Jesus did for us.

Every moment of every day of our lives, we are not our own! We have been bought with the price of Jesus' precious blood, and He has sent us, like He Himself was sent (Jn. 20.21), to serve and minister to others, and not simply to be ministered to by them (Mk. 10.42-45). The Church might actually make more impact in our culture if more of her members would follow Peter's example of ministering to others as long as you have time and breath to do so.

*Think ahead to the day to come: What opportunities for ministry will present to you? How will you prepare for these so that you make the most of the time of your life?*

### **3 The Ministry of Word**

*2 Peter 1.15*

*<sup>15</sup>Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.*

**The Story:** Peter’s “every effort” here involves putting his most important thoughts into written form. He knows that what he has to say matters, not only for the persecuted believers in Asia Minor, but for the Church in every age. Here is a glimpse into the mindset of the apostle, who understood that his words were needed for the Church in his day, but perhaps also beyond his day.

It is easier for people to recall something important when it’s written down for them. Peter’s letter would have been read in the churches of his day, and many copies would have been made and distributed to other churches and Christians. This was the same with all the other apostolic writings, which is why so many thousands of manuscript copies from the first few centuries still exist today. It would be difficult to understate the importance of writing and reading in advancing the faith of Jesus Christ.

He, the Word of God, is pleased to use words – beginning with those of the apostles and prophets – as the foundation on which He will build His Church (Eph. 2.19-22). We neglect those inspired words to our own peril, and to the disruption of Christ’s work in our midst.

**The Structure:** Peter’s example shines for us in another way in this verse. He was eager to make sure that the Word God had given him would be available *after he was gone*. Do we think in those kinds of term? Are we even now ministering to others and teaching the Word in such a way as to ensure that this great work will continue after the Lord has called us home? Paul said we should think about making disciples to the third generation of believers beyond ourselves (2 Tim. 2.2). Thus the teaching of grace and truth forms an unbroken chain from the apostles to us – and from us to the future?

*How do you expect the ministry you are doing in Jesus’ name to survive once the Lord has called you home?*

## 4 Not Making This Up

*2 Peter 1.16*

*16For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

**The Story:** It is not uncommon today to here Gospel detractors claiming that Christianity and the Bible are just a bunch of myths. One should reasonably be able to ask how such a person knows this. Has he studied the history of the Christian movement? Does he know the historical documentation and other evidence supporting the events recorded in Scripture? Does he really suppose that men like Peter – a common fisherman! – would actually endure excruciating suffering and loss for what they would have known to be a mere myth?

It takes more faith to believe that Christianity is based on a myth than it does to believe that the changed lives of men like Peter and Paul can only be explained in terms of a new birth from above, from beyond this world. The Lord Jesus Christ has come in power and majesty, and Peter was one of those present to see and experience Him. So convinced was he by what he'd come to know – and so convinced were multitudes of other believers during those first centuries – that they endured courageous deaths – not the click-and-be-vaporized death of a Jihadist – in order to stand firm for their faith. The faith of Christ is no myth.

**The Structure:** The next time someone to whom you're witnessing suggests that Christianity is just a myth, look at him with a strange look of disbelief and ask, "Are you serious? Do you think that, for 2,000 years, reasonable, intelligent, sensible, loving people would lay down their lives if they had not experienced something very real and very powerful? Do you think I'd bother trying to persuade you to know the Lord if I didn't know Him myself?" I promise you your detractor won't be ready for that response, and it will provide you an opportunity to go on and assure him that the accounts of Jesus, and the life of faith issuing from those accounts, are the only truth worth living – or dying – for.

*Is your life a microcosm of the Kingdom? How could you begin, today, to know more consistent growth in knowing the Lord and showing Him to the people around you?*

## 5 The Glory of Christ

*2 Peter 1.17, 18*

*<sup>17</sup> For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.*

**The Story:** Wow! What must that have been like! Peter was with James and John when Jesus was transfigured and His face and raiment glowed with the glory of God. He was so stunned and frightened at the time that he didn't know what to do. All he could think was, "Wow! We gotta stay here!"

But it was not to be. God allowed Peter to see the glory of His Son for reasons known only to Him, but Peter remembered the incident vividly and, as seems apparent, with some sense of abiding wonder and awe. Jesus had come to bear witness to the Father and His promises, and, because He was faithful, God glorified Him, above all, in His death and resurrection. And God bore witness to Jesus by commending His life and words to all who would be pleasing to the Father. Jesus is the center of the Christian faith, and Peter is His witness – as are we.

**The Structure:** Peter's encounter with the glory of Jesus Christ was different from that which we may know, but we must not be negligent in seeking the Lord, simply because we can't "see" Him the way Peter did. There is glory to behold in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4.6). By coming to Him in His Word, and resting in His Spirit to teach us (1 Cor. 2.12, 13), the hope of glory in which we stand (Rom. 5.1, 2) can become the experience of glory that we know and, what's more, that we can show to others as well (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31).

*Do you find that you often encounter the Lord speaking to you from His glory as you wait on Him in His Word?*



## 6 The Word Made Sure

*2 Peter 1.19*

*<sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts...*

**The Story:** Peter says that the written Word, which they possessed at that time in the form of the Old Testament, is “more sure” than even his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. The prophetic Word of God is the lamp we should use to guide our daily journey in the Lord. We must not rely on experiences or the memory of exciting experiences of being with the Lord. The Word will be our guide until the Lord returns for us, so it’s silly either to look some place else for the guidance we need, or to fail to make resort to the Scriptures frequently.

Peter seems to have been aware that the Lord was adding to His Scriptures in his day, through the writings of apostles like Paul (cf. 2 Pt. 3.15, 16) and, perhaps, even himself. Pay attention to God’s Word and you’ll have the understanding, counsel, guidance, and strength you need to serve the Lord, no matter the adversity.

**The Structure:** Believers in every generation have been tempted in two ways to fail to “pay attention” to the Word. First, some minimize the Scriptures either by failing to consider the whole Bible as the Word of God, or by allowing the Bible to speak only to a limited range of their concerns and interests. All Scripture is inspired, and all Scripture is profitable to equip us for every good work (2 Tim. 3.15-17). We must not neglect any of it, and we must allow its light to shine into every area of our lives. The other mistake believers make is by going beyond what is written in God’s Word, defining their faith and practice more by the spirit of the age and the Spirit of Truth (1 Cor. 4.6). Against this, too, we must be constantly on guard.

*What is your regular practice of “paying attention” to the Word of God? Is this sufficient to equip you for every good work?*

## 7 God Speaking

*2 Peter 1.20, 21*

<sup>20</sup> ...*knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

**The Story:** Those whom we encourage to consider the truth of Scripture sometimes complain that the Bible is open to too many interpretations. No one can know for sure what it really teaches. Well, in the first place, certainly not someone who never takes the time to read or study it. But what about that claim? How can we be sure that our understanding of Scripture is true in any instance?

First, by becoming familiar with all the Scriptures, so that you understand the larger, overarching narrative and thrust of God's revelation (2 Tim. 3.15-17).

Second, by comparing Scriptures from various places in order to shed light from familiar passages on those that are less familiar (1 Cor. 2.12, 13). Theologians call this the "analogy of Scripture."

Third, by checking our understandings against the teaching of the Church down through the ages – staying within the grand tradition of interpretation that believers in all places and times have held to be true (2 Thess. 2.15). This is called the "analogy of faith."

In our day, the resources of earlier generations of believers are more readily available to all Christians than in any previous era. The Spirit Who moved men to write the Scriptures also enables them to understand them, and He has not changed.

**The Structure:** We need to be good students of God's Word. There's just no way around this. Seek the Lord to give you the attitude of Jeremiah or Job concerning His Word: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart..." (Jer. 15.16 ESV); "I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food" (Job 23.12 ESV). When we hunger for God's Word, we will make the time and learn the skills necessary for understanding it as we should. Then we'll be able to "pay attention" to and allow it to light our paths more effectively day by day.

*Would you describe yourself as "hungry" for the Word of God? How do you measure that?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Peter wanted his life to count for the Lord to the very end. His example should guide us as well. What legacy of faith are you hoping to leave behind when the Lord takes you home to glory?
2. Each of us is called to serve where we can, while we can. What does that mean for you during the course of a typical day?
3. Every believer is, in some sense, called to a ministry of the Word – to witness, teach, and encourage others by the Word of God. How does this come to expression in your life? In what ways would you like to be better equipped for this work?
4. Why did Peter say that the Word of God is “more sure” even than his experience of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration?
5. Jesus is the theme or subject of all Scripture (Jn. 5.39). How should knowing this affect our reading and study of the Bible? The way we teach it to others?
6. How can we guard against “private interpretation” of the Scriptures?

*Prayer:*

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Thank you.