

2 Peter 1:16-2:3

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] I do hope you have a copy of God's Word with you this morning. If you will please take it out and turn to 2 Peter 1. This paper is commonly known as the 95 Theses.

It was nailed to the church door at the Church of Wittenberg. But it was originally entitled, brace yourself for it, The Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences, in which Luther outlined 95 reasons why this practice of the Roman Catholic Church was unbiblical and therefore sinful. He arrived at the linchpin of his argument upon doing translation work in the book of Romans. He was troubled as an Augustinian monk, as he was being taught a gospel that was by works. He was very aware that he would never measure up to the standard that was put forth before him. He was honest and he was humble about the condition of his own heart. And so he was put to work translating the book of Romans, which I just find wonderfully, laughably providential. And he didn't make it very far into the book of Romans when he came to Romans 1, verse 16 and 17, where Paul says, The righteous shall live by faith.

[2:07] The righteous shall live by faith, not by indulgences or any other work, but by faith. It was Luther's intention to see Rome change its view on the matter.

And we don't have time to cover the scope of that episode today. It's not why we're really gathered together, although it's a wonderful story. But his action on October 31st, 1517, was the spark that set Europe ablaze with Bible-saturated reformation.

A major work of many of the reformers was to see the Bible translated into the language of the people. Until they did this important work, it was only available in limited print in Latin.

And without a great deal of education, the common Christian was not a reader of Latin. And therefore, Rome had great power to shape European Christianity.

They could teach what they wanted to teach and withhold what they didn't want to teach. The work of Bible translation was carried out by many men across the continent, right?

[3:21] We often attribute the Reformation to Luther himself, but God was at work all across the continent of Europe in the lives of many people and many churches, right?

Men like John Wycliffe, who was a forerunner of the Reformation, had done this important work. Martin Luther, William Tyndale, Miles Coverdale, and many others.

And we are indebted to men such as these. As we sat down to plan the preaching schedule for the rest of this year and noted that October 31st fell on a Sunday this year, we began to muse about what the reformers would think of American Christianity.

Just imagine to them the preciousness of the Word of God. They were bringing it into the language of the people. By God's grand design, the press had been imprinted, had been invented some hundred years earlier.

It was widely being used, so things could be printed and distributed. But even then, can you imagine how very precious it would be to own or even have access to a copy of the Scriptures in your own language, to be able to take it up and to read it?

[4:39] What would they think of us today? These men and women who fought bravely to bring the Bible to the masses. And let's be certain to recognize we are those masses.

I will be quick to admit, I would likely have not been a reader of Latin. I'm not that smart. I just wouldn't have been in that category. I would have been one of those saying, oh, if I could just have the Word in my own language.

What would they think of a people with such access to God's Word and so little biblical literacy? We have in our gathering this morning hundreds of copies of God's Word.

There's a stack of them back there on the back table. In case you forgot yours, just go and pick one up. Every Sunday, there are copies left here. There's a stack of them on the sound booth rail back there.

Right? Just left behind. Right? And we're forgetful. And I get it. Right? We can access other. You probably have another Bible at home. So you go, I'll pick that up when I'm back on the next week.

[5:50] But we treat it in our hearts the same way we often do in the physical form. We have so much access to a God who has spoken to us.

He's revealed himself to us by his Word. And we're largely, relatively, just neglectful of it.

So in brief this morning, again, we're pressing toward baptisms today. We want to have time for that. I don't want to keep you all day long. So join me in briefly looking at our text today from 2 Peter.

I'll begin reading in verse 16. Before I do, beloved, let me remind you that this is God's Word to us. That's why I say this every time I preach. It was written for his glory and our good.

So we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Peter writes, For we do not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[6:55] 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.

But false prophets also arose among the people, Just as there will be false teachers among you, Who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, Even denying the master who bought them, Bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

And many will follow their sensuality, And because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, And their destruction is not asleep.

[8:18] Now this morning, I want to focus your attention on just one verse, Verse 19. But before we spend our time on this verse, Let's look at the larger context of what Peter is communicating here.

The reason that we read all of those verses together. And verse 16 begins with the word, For. And any time we see that word, We need to back up a little bit to understand, What is the argument that he's progressing through in this case?

Well, in this time, Peter has spent the lion's share of chapter 1, Speaking of the holiness that will accompany the life of a believer. Like, what does the life look like of one who has responded by faith to Jesus Christ?

Notice in chapter 1, verse 3, the first half of that verse, He says, His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

And he goes on to elaborate on the qualities of the Christian life. And he says in verse 12, Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities.

[9:27] And then in verse 15, And I will make every effort so that after my departure, You may be able at any time to recall these things.

This is all that leads us up to the fore at the beginning of verse 16. He's saying, right, the life that is in Christ by faith is going to produce fruit.

Here's a list of that fruit, qualities, he calls them, in chapter 1. And I'm going to be sure you remember these qualities. Why? Because you want to be sure that you're in Christ, right?

You want to be sure that you have, in fact, placed your faith in Him, that He's given to you the gift of the Spirit, who's helping you to walk in His ways. So, how is it that Peter will make every effort so that after my departure, You may be able at any time to recall these things?

That's where his mind is as he goes on in verse 16 to say, 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.

[10:36] 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.

What is he talking about? He's making this very clear argument from 15, I'm going to do everything I can to remind you of these qualities.

And then he launches into this rant. Is he off topic? Absolutely not. What he's talking about is the transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

The moment when Peter and James and John were taken up onto a mountain, and Jesus' deity was put on display. He was changed in form.

They got to see this exalted God Christ. You can read about that further in Matthew chapter 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9.

[11:40] What an astounding thing this would have been to be a witness of. It was only Jesus' closest confidants, His closest disciples, that were even brought with Him up to this mountain.

The rest of the apostles didn't get to see this moment in His life. Just Peter and James and John. Jesus' pre-crucifixion resurrection promises were confirmed to them in this moment.

Right? This was declarative. Right? In many ways, Jesus had called Himself God. He had declared it outright. He had done things like healing and forgiveness of sin. But now they were seeing Him changed in this moment.

And here in 2 Peter, Peter is suggesting that this is the prominent event for affirmation that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ.

That His life was perfect. He never sinned. That His death was meaningfully sacrificial. He paid the eternal debt that is due us for our sin on the cross.

[12:51] That He had the power to be raised from the dead. This moment bolsters Jesus' earthly ministry and informs His heavenly ministry.

This is an exceptional thing. If you were to ask me if I could step into any moment in history, I think this is the moment. I think I'd want to be on that mountain.

I would want to see Jesus Christ transfigured. This moment of all the moments to be a witness of. But Peter does something most curious.

Something that I just think ought to ignite your heart as you hold a copy of God's Word in your hands this morning. He says this. Remember, there's this confirmation of who Jesus is.

This is the Christ. Right? He is God made flesh. They were witnesses of this. We were eyewitnesses of this, he says.

[13:51] And then in verse 19, he says, And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed. We have a greater confidence that God's Word is God's Word.

And it displays for us this Christ. That is incredible. God wrote us a book. That we can take up and we can read.

And we can behold Him in it. Peter is saying, This is better than being on the mount of transfiguration. To birth in his people a confidence that Jesus is the Christ.

This is what Peter is saying right here. Right? It's astounding. I can still remember the first moment that I read 2 Peter and this jumped off the page at me.

It wasn't all that long ago. It was just some years ago. If you're at all like me, I often find myself kind of skimming the seconds and thirds of the epistles.

[14:56] This is a profound thing that he is doing. We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed. Now he's talking about the scripture of his day.

We believe in the canonicity of the Bible. The 66 books. We don't have time to explain all that to you today. I think that he would also apply this to these future books that would be confirmed and put in the canon that we hold today.

It's more fully confirmed. And because of that, 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.

Can you just imagine being on the mount of transfiguration and not paying attention to what was happening? To being up there with these men and off picking flowers or looking at the shape of the clouds or enjoying the view from the top of the mountain.

Right? The most important thing was happening right there. They paid attention. And he's saying, we have something more fully confirmed and you will do well to pay attention to it.

[16:06] Pay attention to the word. He goes on to defend the canonicity, the veracity of the scripture. Right? That the scripture that they held was in fact God's word.

He says in verse 20, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. Right? Man is not its source. 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. Men were used as the agents to pen the Bible. But they are not its ultimate author.

Right? Men spoke from God. Paul writes in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Right? We often refer to the scriptures as being inspired. Meaning that God spoke into men who pinned the message down. But here you can see in 2 Timothy 3, 16, all scripture is inspired.

[17:20] It's breathed out by God. And what Paul is doing there is he is emphasizing that God is its very source. It comes from him.

It is his word. It is his word. And therefore, we would do well to pay attention to it. So how is it that Peter will make every effort so that after his departure, we will be able at any time to recall these things?

That was verse 15. He will do so by giving his readers confidence in God's word. See the logical flow that he's making here?

How is he going to do this? He's going to labor to give people confidence in his word. The things he has said will need to be remembered because the way of truth was and it will be perverted.

So if we read into chapter 2, sometimes the chapter breaks don't serve us very well. I think this is one of those cases. He's talking about the canon.

[18:27] He's talking about the scriptures that they held written by these prophets. And he says, but false prophets also arose among the people. Back when the word was becoming the word in their day, even then there were false prophets, just as there will be false teachers among you.

It's an age old problem that still exists today. There will be people who will be false teachers that will lead people astray.

They will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, denying Christ himself. And I would suggest to you that anybody who's teaching a salvation that is by works is denying the master.

Jesus' person and his work, this is what accomplishes the salvation of the church and not works.

They bring upon themselves swift destruction and many will follow their sensuality.

And because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle. And their destruction is not asleep.

[19:40] And I believe that Peter is intending to give to these Christians comfort that these men's deeds will not go unpunished. They will someday be held accountable for the things that they teach.

And something I see in the church these days that troubles me is that we look at teachers who don't preach the word. They don't open it up and preach it.

Or they take a snippet of a verse and then they walk away from it. That they don't really feed God's people when God's people gather. And we give them permission to do so because they have good intentions.

Because they want people to come to faith in Christ. These people, with all of the sincerity and kindness I can muster in my heart, are misled at best.

Men who stand up and declare to be pastors, to be preachers of God's word, who don't preach God's word, will be condemned for that activity.

[20:46] They will be judged for what it is they deliver to people. It is a frightful thing to preach. Even to a small congregation.

Every Lord's Day that I preach, I tremble because I know I'll be held accountable for the things that I teach. Whether I'm rightly teaching you from the word or wrongly teaching you from the word.

So there's been a problem and there will be a problem that it's going to get contorted. It's going to get twisted up, right? It's going to be used to say things that it doesn't say. People are going to isogete the text, read into the text what they want it to say instead of exegete it.

What does the word actually say? What does it mean? It is what the people need. You may have heard the statement. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

If we truly love people, we're going to open up the word for them. We're going to teach them the word. We will do well to pay attention to it.

[21:58] So let's think a little bit more about verse 19 together. There's the context of what Peter is saying. Verse 19, which I've already read. Let me read it one more time. And we have the prophetic word, the scripture, 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. I want to spend the next hour talking about this verse, but I won't.

So to just give us a bit of an outline for it, we're going to use the lens of a Latin phrase because we are good reform people. And I love church history, so I have to use Latin from time to time.

This Latin phrase first appeared in 1674 in a devotional book by Judocus van Laudenstein. Okay. See if you can write that one down.

It's on the back of your bulletin if you care for it, but here's the Latin phrase, and I'll give it to you in English. *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda, secundum verbe de.*

[23:09] *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda, secundum verbe de.* The church is reformed and always being reformed according to the word of God.

You'll often hear kind of the cry, the reformation cry, *semper reformanda*. You'll hear that pulled out. But this is the entirety of the phrase. It's the first time that this phrase appears in print at very least. The church is reformed and always being reformed according to the word of God. So we'll take that phrase as a brief outline to talk about and to think about this idea. What does it mean for us to do well, to pay attention to the scripture?

In our age. So first, *Ecclesia reformata*. The church is reformed. Van Lodenschein would have been a very, had a very particular audience in mind when writing the devotional book that this phrase was found in.

He would not have been suggesting that doctrine is to be figured out on the fly. But he would have been writing to the Dutch Reformed Church. This tradition was confessional and it held to the inspiration, authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of the scripture.

[24:24] The church he is referring to was a church that had returned to the truth of the Bible for its form and its practice. Right? They were already doing well to pay attention.

I think this is what he meant by that phrase. *Ecclesia reformata*. The church is reformed. It has left behind the religion of works. It has come back to the scripture.

It has seen that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Beloved, it is good for us to be descendants of such people.

We want to be careful, Reformation Day, not to venerate the reformers. Right? But it is good that our faith is set on their shoulders.

It did not begin in 1674 or in 1517. But we are indebted to those people who faithfully handed down the truth to us. Right? God has been at work amongst his people to bring to us his word.

[25:28] Right? As we pick up the scripture, we ought to be firstly and foremostly thankful to God. Right? He has spoken and he's brought us his word. But we also ought to be thankful for the people that were used by him to bring it to us.

Right? Men like William Tyndale, who ran all over Europe, hiding and avoiding being captured so that he could translate the New Testament and much of the Old Testament.

In the English. Right? An incredible work. A work of God done by a man for our benefit. Men and women like Van Lodenstein were a pillar and buttress of the truth for God's glory and for our good. And I pray that we will be part of a people who are generationally minded. That our God will be praised in this place and among all peoples until our Lord returns.

Like, are we going to pass that baton? Be faithful to the word. Carry it to the next generation. But here's the danger. A danger that the reformers knew well.

[26:32] A danger that Peter and Van Lodenstein knew. The church does not drift toward holiness. The church does not drift naturally toward the scripture.

Right? The church does not naturally submit itself to the word. Right? It is a work. It's a thing we have to be actively doing together. We must pay attention.

Which brings us to the next part of our phrase. Semper reformanda. Always being reformed. And I think what was meant, or at least should be, if it's not what Van Lodenstein meant, was and always in need of being reformed.

Church is reformed and it is always in need of being reformed. And this does not mean that we're disregarding and throwing out the doctrines of the faith.

The faith. Don't hear me saying that at all. But we should never think that we have arrived. We shouldn't think that we've got it all figured out. We shouldn't leave the scripture behind.

[27:39] Like, oh, read that book and I've learned from it. On to other books. We are not, notice the phrase, always reforming, but rather we are always being reformed.

Which means an action that's happening to us. And it connotes a standard to which we are being changed. The church, the faithful church, is being acted upon by the spirit as we take up the word so that we would be changed to God's standard.

We are to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place. Maybe more than we ever have before. But certainly it's always been true that we live in a dark place.

You can step out, pull your phone out of your pocket right now, and find untruth everywhere. It is not a difficult thing to access.

We have to pay attention to the lamp that's going to lead us through the darkness of this world. And we're to do this until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.

[28:53] In short, this is a beautiful language, but in short, he is talking about glorification. He's talking about what will happen when we reach the end of this life.

Which means, do we ever stop paying attention? Absolutely not. We are to pay attention and to pay attention. Because until we're glorified, until we leave behind these sinful bodies, before we leave behind this world, we will be in a dark place and we will need a lamp to guide us through.

So, beloved, let us not be so haughty to think that we have arrived. But what standard is that standard? We should test everything by the word and be willing to change our beliefs and practices if we find ourselves inconsistent with the word.

Now, note carefully that I am saying inconsistent with the word, not inconsistent with the culture. Faithful Christians have never read the Bible through the lens of their culture, but have seen the Bible as a counter-cultural agent.

It pushes against the wisdom of the world. It's not the natural thought pattern. And it's not the natural inclination for us to think the way the scripture would have us think.

[30:27] We must be in the word. And we must be in it regularly. And we must drink of it deeply. And we must meditate on it. And we must memorize it. We should be saturated with God's word.

And beloved, if you are beloved, if God has loved you in Christ, why would we not love him in a way that compels us to know him in the way that he's shown himself to us, the way more fully confirmed the scripture?

One of my favorite doctrines of the Bible is the clarity of scripture. We can know what this book says and what it means.

I am grateful that when we approach the Bible with humility, by the power of the Spirit, we can know the will of God. Throughout the church's history, the vast majority of Christians have been very simple people.

They have not been high-minded people. And I praise the Lord for the incredibly intelligent people that are part of the church. But generally speaking, this has not been the case. People through centuries have taken up the word, read it, understood it, lived faithful lives in accord with it.

[31:47] You don't have to be particularly brilliant to take the word and read. Beloved, we must not stop paying attention to this word.

I think this is what the Reformers would want us to hear today. I think they would look at us in our wealth of word and go, what are you doing? It is everywhere.

We don't have just one good English translation. We have lots of good English translations and some bad ones too. But there are lots of Bible around us. So much opportunity to know God by his word.

We must not think that we have it all figured out. We must have our beliefs and our actions shaped by this word. We will do well to pay attention to it as a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.