

Time of Grace Ministry
Satan's Slippery Slopes: The Inspired and Inerrant Word?

2 Peter 1:16-21

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Pastor Michael Novotny

Do you ever struggle with believing everything the Bible says? It's pretty hard not to pick some of the verses that you really like and some of the verses that you really don't. So how do we come to trust everything that God has written from cover to cover? Pastor Mark Jeske's going to wrestle with that essential and important question. It's coming up next on Time of Grace.

Pastor Mark Jeske

When people are being inducted into high office - a little bit at state level, but especially at national level - you are expected publicly to take an oath. It's not enough just to get hired or elected for a job; you now publicly need to express your willingness and determination to be a servant to the people who put you there. They were inspired to be careful of what they said. If they - you used to have to put your hand on a Bible in court. Now they're - I think we've dispensed with that formality because so few people actually accept its authority and even fewer are scared of God's judgment if they lie so, unfortunately, there's probably a lot more perjury today than there ever was. But the point is at least people had the idea that the Bible was the gold standard of truth.

,I'm going to tell you about an experience I had. About a year or two ago, I was - when I was on vacation, I always visit congregations around. I don't just keep going to the same place; I like to stimulate my imagination; how do the different Christians worship? What kind of leadership do they have? What kind of programs are they offering? What's the vibe there? Can I learn something? What do you have to teach me? Do you do something really well here that I might aspire to and hope that we can hopefully start here? What can I learn?

So I'm sitting there in a historic, gorgeous building in one of the oldest congregations still in continuous existence in our town. And I'm sitting there and the minister comes out to do a Scripture reading and he said - wait for it - he said, "Let's all now listen for the word of God." And I was so sad; my heart just sank and my dentures loosened up and I just thought, "What?" Did you ever have these impulses to like, out yourself and stand up and say, "No! That's not true. It's not up to you to decide what in the Bible you can depend on actually not to be lying to you. The Bible is the gold standard and you're the one with the confusion in your head that needs clearing up. You are not the judge of what may or may not be true in Scripture; the Scripture's the judge of you! You bend yourself to the word; don't bend the word to fit what you think might have come out of the lips of Jesus Christ." And it hit me at that moment harder than ever before. I knew that there are people in our country who no longer view the Bible as authoritative as something completely trustworthy; I knew that but I just hadn't seen it. What I had not expected was in what was once a kind of a rocked, ribbed, bastion of Bible confidence

that here it wasn't just the atheists and agnostics who had scorn for the Bible; here it was right within the bosom of the church. And we were committing suicide ourselves; we Christians were doing that and it crushed my spirit. And I don't know if I heard a word the minister said, I was so - I was spinning; I kind of like had vertigo and I thought these poor people here have no confidence. What should they think? That they're going to now read through and check yes, no, yes, no? Are you going to like get your highlighter and put little yellow things around things you can confidently believe in? Or you know, Thomas Jefferson did that already a couple of hundred years ago. He basically took his scissors and cut out the parts of the life of Jesus that he thought were absurd. And that is why I want to spend a few minutes with you giving you encouragement not to let Satan steal from you your ability to know when you're hearing God's word or not. This is a big deal because the word is your lifeline to heaven. The word is your bond to Jesus Christ. If that is frayed or clipped or sawn apart, you might be cast adrift. And it is no surprise to me that so many once strong Christian denominations are eroding like crazy because if the people no longer know for sure what to believe in or anything matters, if it's open season on deciding what is or is not true in the Bible, how can you stop with just a few things? Why would it surprise you that what used to be very strong theological schools or theology departments in supposedly Christian colleges and universities now encourage people to look critically at the literary style of the Bible and decide what may or may not have really been written by Moses? What really - which different types of documents may the Scripture have been assembled from that clearly God had nothing to do with? Which are human opinions in the Bible and what actually comes straight from God for you and for me? And once you're done snipping and cutting around, there actually ends up with being nothing left that you can be sure of.

And people even make that into a virtue - see, this is really crazy! People actually argue, "Hey, I thought we were supposed to be saved by faith? Well, I have faith! You're trying to find certainty." Let me tell you something: You are indeed saved by faith but not faith which is just a leap into the darkness with your eyes closed, saying a Hail Mary or the Lord's Prayer hoping somebody catches you. Faith doesn't mean a blind leap based on nothing. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:1 that faith is the substance of things hoped for, confidence and certainty of things not seen. In other words, biblical faith, the faith that saves you, that connects you to Christ, is not a blind leap of guessing. It's not crossing your fingers. It's absolute confidence in something you cannot see. It's the opposite of fear. It's the opposite of doubt. The opposite of doubt is certainty and it is that certainty that you will have if you let God speak to you without arguing with the process.

I'd like to invite you to take your Bible or you can use a mobile device if it's handy to you and open up to 2 Peter 1 and there's a couple of paragraphs at the end of chapter 1 that are breathtaking mountaintops of insight into how God communicates with people and how he rescues us and saves us.

There are two things at stake here for you. One is what is the content of your beliefs? What actually do you believe? It's not just enough to say, "I believe." Believe in what? People might believe in their NFL team or their major league baseball team and it may be that they're going to have a terrible season and get crushed and end up many games out of the playoffs. This is more important than that. This is what's going to happen to you on the day of your death; what's going

to happen to you on the Day of Judgment. Are you going to spend eternity in heaven with God? Or are you going to be shoveling coal for the devil for eight billion, million, zillion years? This is a big deal. What do you believe - and the twin question that goes with it - is why? What is your authority? How do you know that? You need to know. I can't believe for you. Nobody can believe for you. This is your business. You need to know and claim what it is that is the basis of your faith and why you're claiming what you claim.

Here are God's answers for you. If you're interested in God's voice, God's strength, God's data, God's content, God's authority, God's confidence, here it is. Peter is talking to people in the northern part of Asia Minor, five different provinces, his second letter. If you start at verse 12 - there's almost no perfect way to jump in here; it's like a carousel that's moving - so we're just going to have to jump on and start riding. He's talking to people that need reminding, "So I'll always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have." Doesn't that sound kind of dumb right out of the chute? If they know all this stuff and are firmly established, why do they need reminding? If you're under the age of 30, that seems like a dumb thing to say. If you're older than 30, you get it. If you're anywhere near as old as me, you don't even need to hear it a second time. Every night when I put my head on my pillow, facts and information start leaking out of the ear, whichever one is downwards on the pillow, and I'm dumber in the morning than I was the night before. I can't explain to you why that happens; I'm sure not happy about it but the fact is I'm losing information every day. And the next day, I grab for a fact and I go to the drawer where I know it is and I pull open the drawer of my memory and guess what? The drawer is empty; there's nothing there. That applies to my faith, as well. Faith is consumable; it's like gasoline in your car, we're burning it up. We get forgetful about things that God has told us and the older we get, the more our memory gets a little shaky and unreliable. We have amnesia and so we need this reminding.

Peter knew that and he said, "If anyone does not," up in verse 9, he said, "If anybody does not have these Christian characteristics, he's nearsighted and blinded, has forgotten that he's been cleansed from his past sins." We're all struggling with spiritual amnesia; we've got to keep reloading each day so that we have both the content and the certainty that we need. "I think it's right to refresh my memory as long as I live in the tent of this body. I know I'll soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus has made clear to me." He knew he was dying. In fact, he knew he wasn't going to die a natural death. He didn't know exactly how but he and his friend Paul both were executed during the reign of the cruel emperor, Nero, but he didn't know when that was going to be. He just knew there was like an anvil, like in a roadrunner cartoon, there's an anvil over his head and it's going to drop at any minute. So he wanted to make every minute count and wanted to keep reminding these people because it was going to be their job to continue what he was doing to sustain the storytelling. And he reminded them of the stories. He said, "I want you to be able - when I'm gone - I want you to be able to remember these things. We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." So right here, he says we didn't make this up; it wasn't our idea. In fact, it's so unbelievable, we could have never dreamed up a story that wild. We're simply telling you what happened.

"We were eyewitnesses." That's authority number one. "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty." Secondly, we're - is this a word, "ear-witnesses?" We're ear-witnesses! "He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard the voice," the voice of God the Father putting his stamp of approval on the son on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured, "when we were with him on that sacred mountain." So these are two powerful certainties that the testimony and information that Peter shared with them - either relayed through verbally or possibly some of them heard him speak. I don't know if he had actually personally been on a church planting tour of that northern part of Asia Minor? We have no knowledge from Scripture whether his traveling missionary work led him up to that region or not; we just know to whom he was writing. But for sure they had it written down. And this is God's spectacular gift to people. Before the invention of writing, there was the word of God but it was verbal and it had to be shared orally. I think, personally, I believe that's why God let people live so long back in the days of Adam and Eve and Methuselah. They lived seven, eight, nine centuries and I think God used that to kind of reduce the misinformation that happens when you're playing the telephone game, word to word, when messages have to be transmitted from one to one to one to one; stuff breaks down. But he let people live really long so they could keep the message consistent. And Adam was around to see many, many greats of his children and grandchildren and stringing out I don't know how many dozens of "greats." If you lived to be over 950 years old, you can see an awful lot of your descendants and Adam could keep telling the story of the fall and the redemption.

Then God invented writing and told Moses, "start writing things down." And this, in a way, became even more powerful than oral transmission of the word of God because now once it's in writing, it stops. It freezes and it doesn't get garbled. Today, when I live in an incredible era, the invention of mechanical writing called printing freezes it even better and also makes multiple copies possible. Handwriting, you only had one copy. A printing press can churn out hundreds and thousands at the end of a day. Digitally today, stuff can fly around the world and the amount of error that can creep in is so small because electronically you can be on top of everything and its content is fixed. So the word of God is more easily able to be transmitted today than ever.

St. Peter says that's an even more powerful witness than the eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses, which is good because they're dead. You can't hear Peter's voice; neither can you hear the voices of the people he testified to directly, the first wave of hearers. You and I are now many centuries set apart from them but we still can hear his message because of what's written down. That's his point in verse 19: "As something even more certain," than the eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses, we have the "word of the prophets and you will do well to pay attention to it, to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." Well, that's a strange metaphor, isn't it? I bet you never said, "Hey, you know what? Today the morning star rose in my heart." What an odd metaphor. Do you know what the morning star is? Probably not because you and I live in a city. Because of streetlights, probably 90 percent of the stars in the sky are not visible to you. You can't see them because of ambient light reduces the sharpness of your vision to see the stars up there. In this world, especially near desert lands where there's no water vapor in the air, their night sky was a completely different experience looking up than what yours is. They could - people could see with the naked eye not only quite a few stars that

you and I would need telescopes to see, they could just see them clear. They could also see the moving planets. You could actually see some of the nearer planets and Venus is the morning star because you can see it just before dawn. And the planet Venus, when it becomes visible, became known as the morning star because it's the tipoff, if you're a night watchman, that your shift is just about over. So Jesus, in the book of Revelation at the end of Scripture, is called the bright and shining morning star because his appearance means that God's plans for the rescue of the human race are just about completed. Be ready; he'll be back at any minute. He's the morning star with the tipoff that the dawn, the daybreak, is just about here.

"The morning star rises in your hearts," means that the Holy Spirit has flipped on the lights on your insides. You're born in the dark; the morning star starts to give you light and you get that through the word of the prophets what's been written down in your Scripture. So the Bible's not just an interesting old collection of stories by some pious believers that you now have to sift through and try to figure out what in that might be true, sort of like Aesop's Fables where you read the stories of a guy pulling a thorn out of the paw of a lion. Did that ever happen? Probably not but it's a cute story and there's like a moral to it that you should always be nice to people and even a great, big, strong bully can be weak and vulnerable, too. And if you're nice to bullies, maybe they'll get over their bully-ness and will get to be a little nicer to you, too. I mean, isn't that a sweet little story? Your job is not to go through the Bible and try to find the moral in the story. Your job is to stand in awe of what God has done for you. Your job is to be in awe that someone loved you enough to take on human flesh, let go of his heavenly throne. Instead of being waited on hand and foot by millions of angels, came down here to walk in the dust and to be basically misunderstood by your trainees and to find great, intense hostility in the religious organization that was supposed to be ready for you and be your welcoming committee. That is what we stand in awe of.

And it's not up to you to pick your way through and say, "Well, that might have happened; he might have said that." "No, I don't think he did that." It should come as no surprise to you that when people have picked away the authority of Scripture, anything goes in what you do with the Bible. They get rid of the miracles because they say, "Ah, that never happened." It's open season on what they think Jesus may or may not have said and they only pick out the pieces that align with the philosophy they have chosen. "Jonah and the whale? Never happened! There's no way a human being could be swallowed by a big fish, get coughed out three days later, and live to tell the tale. That's impossible so it didn't happen." See where that leads you? Getting rid of the whole front end of Genesis, of course, is a piece of cake because that's all absurd and implausible, too. "No way Noah could have gotten all those critters on his ark and fed them all for over a year. Since I decided that's logically impossible, therefore it didn't happen, so none of that stuff happened." But you've now just thrown away the meaning of the human race and the entire story of where human sin came from.

Instead, pay attention! Pay attention to it so that the light will shine in your heart and the morning star can rise. "Above all," - here's why. That's the content; now here's the reason, here's the authority. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." It wasn't their idea. Not a one of these holy writers in the book on your lap decided, "You know? I think I would like to be a prophet. I aspire to being an author

whose work will now be in the Bible. Yes, that's what I'm going to do." "Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man. But these people - mostly men, but some amazing women, too, have their voices preserved, "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." In other words, who guaranteed the content in your Bible? God did! And he used human instruments, he used pens and even sometimes dictation arrangements - Saint Paul dictated some of his letters; other people actually did the handwriting. But the content came from God using Paul and Peter's and the others vocabularies, using their unique style, using their life situation, using their human differences, but yet overseeing the content so that you might have 100 percent confidence in its content, even when it seems unbelievable or implausible. Even when it seems to break the laws of physics that you think are immutable, if Scripture says it you may bet your life and soul on it and you will win. Don't let Satan steal your confidence in the word. It is your lifeline to Christ. It is your lifeline to heaven and it is the only way that you can know for sure that you have a Savior who loves you, has washed you clean, and brought God's favor upon you. The only way that you know that for sure is because we have the word of God made more certain and it's written down for you here.

When you're terrified and sweating bullets as you are heading for court to appear before God, just sing a little song to yourself: "Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong they are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!" Why? "The Bible tells me so." Do you believe that? Yes or no? Yes! Amen.

Pastor Michael Novotny

Well, what a massively important thing for us to know; that we can trust what God says. If we go on our own reasoning, our own logic, or our own feelings, we might miss the incredible foundation, that rock solid foundation that God wants us to have. We know that the Scripture is true because it comes from a Father who would not lie to us and we know we can trust that because he gave us his one and only Son.

We here at Time of Grace believe in the power of prayer. The Bible says that if we call upon God in our day of trouble, he will answer us according to his will and for our good. So we would love to pray for you. Is there something going on in your life? Something financial, physical, or especially, spiritual, that we could lift up before our Father in heaven, that we could ask him to do his will in your life? We love to encourage and support you that way so feel free to let us know. And, on that note, let's pray.

Dear Gracious Father, we are so grateful that we can trust you. That when we read passages about your love and about your forgiveness and the fact that you rejoice over us and delight in us because of Jesus, we don't have to wonder if that's some man's opinion; we know it comes from the very lips of God. And so, we praise you today, Holy Spirit, that you carried along the prophets and the apostles to write down the very words that you wanted us to hear. Thank you for your trustworthy word. Thank you that we don't have to base our beliefs on what culture thinks in the current moment, which will certainly change. And we don't have to base our

thoughts and our feelings based on what we feel but instead we can build all of that on the faith that we have in your word.

Thank you, God, for speaking to us. Thank you that we have a book; that we don't just have to trust some guy who stands on a stage or some of the internal intuition that we have. You've written it down so we can be certain and true. We love you for your word. Most of all, we love you for your Son. Thank you for being the kind of God that you are. We pray this all in Jesus' name, Amen.

With Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mike Novotny, and because the words and promises of God which are 100 percent sure, it all starts now.



TIME OF GRACE®

Satan's Slippery Slopes: The Inspired and Inerrant Word?

Study Notes

1 Peter 1:16-21: ¹⁶“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹For 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.”

Points to Ponder

1. Why is it so dangerous to your faith to pick apart the Bible and choose just parts of it to believe? If you think only part of it is God’s Word, what does it mean for the rest? And can you be confident in the parts you think are true?
2. **Read 1 Peter 1:16-18.** What authority does Peter show for testifying about Jesus in these verses? And what certainty does that give you?
3. **Read 1 Peter 1:19.** What else did God give us to make us certain that what is said about Jesus is true? How many Old Testament prophecies did Jesus fulfill? Who works in our hearts to believe these prophecies?
4. Finally, who inspired the Scriptures? What does that mean?
5. When you trust through faith that God’s Word is the truth, what else can you be absolutely sure of?

Don't let Satan tempt you to think that any part of the Bible isn't true. That's a dangerous slippery slope! God's Word is your lifeline to Christ. It's the only way you can know for sure that you have a Savior who loves you, has washed you clean, and who brought you God's favor. You know for sure because of his inerrant, inspired Word.

What else does God say?

John 17:17: Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Homework for Next Week

Read Luke 5:17-26.