



LESSON FOUR

Developing the Virtue and Taking Heed of the Prophetic Word

Scripture Reading:

2 Peter 1:5-21

- 1:5** And for this very reason also, adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue; and in virtue, knowledge;
- 1:6** And in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in endurance, godliness;
- 1:7** And in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love.
- 1:8** For these things, existing in you and abounding, constitute you neither idle nor unfruitful unto the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1:9** For he in whom these things are not present is blind, being shortsighted, having forgotten the cleansing of his past sins.
- 1:10** Therefore, brothers, be the more diligent to make your calling and selection firm, for doing these things you shall by no means ever stumble.
- 1:11** For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to you.
- 1:12** Therefore I will be ready always to remind you concerning these things, even though you know them and have been established in the present truth.
- 1:13** And I consider it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by a reminder,
- 1:14** Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is imminent, even as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.
- 1:15** Moreover I will also be diligent that you may be able, after my exodus, to bring these things to mind at all times.
- 1:16** 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 became eyewitnesses of that One's majesty.
- 1:17** For He received from God the Father honor and glory, a voice such as this being borne to Him by the magnificent glory: This is My Son, My Beloved, in whom I delight.
- 1:18** And this voice we heard being borne out of heaven while we were with Him in the holy mountain.
- 1:19** And we have the prophetic word *made* more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;
- 1:20** Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation;
- 1:21** For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. Explain the relation between virtue and divine nature.
2. Why do we need to develop knowledge? What are some examples of 'superficial knowledge'?
3. What does the 'processed God' refer to?

Section 2:

1. What is the difference between our love and Peter's love for the brothers?
2. What are some of the characteristics of God's love?
3. How can we be kings in the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Section 3:

1. What is the present truth according to 2 Peter 1:12? What is the antidote to the heresy in the apostasy?
2. What is the meaning of apostasy? When did it creep into the church?
3. What does Peter seem to say in verse 16? How did he inoculate the believers against the apostasy?

Section 4:

1. Explain 2 Peter 1:19. What are the two matters covered in this verse.
2. What will be the result if we give heed to prophetic word?
3. How can you prove that the prophetic word is altogether reliable and trustworthy?

DEVELOPING VIRTUE BY ENJOYING THE DIVINE NATURE

In verse 5 Peter says, “And for this very reason also, adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue, and in virtue knowledge.” The word “virtue” refers to the virtue mentioned in verse 3, where Peter speaks of the One who has “called us to His own glory and virtue.” Furthermore, this virtue is related to the divine nature (v. 4), which denotes the different aspects of the riches of what God is. The virtue in verses 3 and 5 is the issue of the experience of the divine nature, the enjoyment of the divine nature, in verse 4. When we partake of the divine nature, the different aspects of the riches of what God is, these riches become our virtues. For example, God is love, light, holiness, righteousness, and kindness. All these are God’s attributes. Each divine attribute is also a virtue. When we enjoy what God is, we enjoy His holiness. Then this holiness becomes a virtue in us and with us. The principle is the same with the enjoyment of other divine attributes.

The essence or element of virtue is contained in faith as a seed. This seed is actually Christ Himself, and Christ is God in all that He is. Because all that God is, is in Christ, Christ is the embodiment of what God is. This Christ has become our inheritance. The response to, or reflection of, this embodiment within us is faith. Faith, then, is also our inheritance. Within faith as a seed are included all the divine attributes, all the riches of what God is. Because we have this seed of faith with the divine nature, we must go on to develop this seed. The first thing that comes forth in this development is virtue. Therefore, virtue is the result of enjoying the divine nature, the result of enjoying what God is.

THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROCESSED GOD

In verse 5 Peter says that in our virtue we need to develop knowledge. Virtue requires the bountiful supply of the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (vv. 2, 3, 8) regarding the things related to the divine life and godliness and to the partaking of the divine nature.

We may have a great deal of knowledge, but our knowledge may be shallow and superficial. We may not know life or know what like precious faith is. Moreover, we may not know anything regarding the divine nature, and we may even oppose it when it is pointed out from the Bible

that believers may become partakers of the divine nature. Those with a superficial knowledge also may not know that godliness is the expression of God, that Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God, and that Christ today is the life-giving Spirit. To lack the knowledge of such matters is to be short of the knowledge of the depths of the truth in the Bible.

Some believers have been hindered or even spoiled by superficial knowledge. They may be fundamental in their doctrine, but they may be fundamental in a superficial way. Superficial fundamentalism may actually be a kind of “drug” that can dull the spiritual senses. A good number of Christians have been “drugged” by the influence of a superficial fundamentalism. For this reason, it is very difficult to speak with them about having Christ as our food and enjoyment. If you tell them that we can eat Christ, digest Christ, and assimilate Him so that He becomes the constituent of our being, they would say that such a teaching is heretical. They may react and say, “Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is on the throne in heaven. How can we eat Him, and how can He become the constituent of our being?” They may even consider scriptural teachings such as these to be blasphemous.

Some with superficial knowledge also oppose the matter of mingling. The word “mingling” is used in the Old Testament. Leviticus 2 speaks of the mingling of oil with fine flour to make the meal offering. The concept of mingling, therefore, is surely according to the Scriptures.

Furthermore, in John 6 the Lord Jesus says that He is the bread, the living bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world, and that whoever eats Him will also live because of Him. Consider what happens to the food we eat. The food is digested, assimilated, and eventually mingled with our fibers and cells. Is it not true, then, that eating implies mingling? The digestion and assimilation of the food we eat definitely involves mingling. The food we eat is mingled with our very constitution. In the same principle, when we eat the Lord as the bread of life and digest and assimilate Him in our spiritual being, He is mingled with us and we with Him. However, certain Christians do not have this knowledge, which is a knowledge of the depths of biblical truth.

The knowledge spoken of in 1:5 is the full knowledge of God and of our Lord. We need a full knowledge not of the unprocessed God, the

“raw” God, but of the processed God. The expression “processed God” refers to the God who became a man through incarnation, who lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years, who died on the cross and was buried, who was resurrected, and who has ascended to the heavens. Incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension are all a part of a long process. Because Christ has passed through such a process, no longer is He merely God with the element of divinity; He is also man with the element of humanity. Our Lord is both God and man. He has both the divine nature and the human nature. Moreover, He also includes the elements of human living, His all-inclusive death, and His life-imparting resurrection. Such a word concerning the processed God may sound alien or strange to those who have only a superficial knowledge of the Word. But according to what Peter says in 1:5, we need to supply bountifully in our virtue the full knowledge of God.

If believers do not have the proper knowledge, how can they have the development described in 1:5-7? It is not possible to have this development apart from the full knowledge of God. With some believers there is hardly any development. They may not even have a full realization concerning the like precious faith, not knowing that this faith is the all-inclusive seed within them. They have never heard this kind of teaching. Their knowledge is not on this line, but is related instead to a superficial religious understanding.

SELF-CONTROL, ENDURANCE, AND GODLINESS

In verse 6 Peter goes on to say, “And in knowledge self-control, and in self-control endurance, and in endurance godliness.” Self-control is the exercise of control over the self in its passions, desires, and habits. In our knowledge we need to develop such a self-control.

In our self-control we need to develop endurance. Self-control is related to the self, but endurance is related to others and to our circumstances. As to ourselves, we must have self-control, and as to our circumstances, no matter what they may be, we need endurance. We need to have endurance with the members of our family, with our neighbors, and with various things that disturb us. For example, when you are bothered by something in your environment, you

need endurance. We need to develop endurance in order to bear with others and with our circumstances.

In verse 6 Peter also says that in our endurance we need to develop godliness. Godliness means God-likeness, that is, being like God and expressing God. The Christian life should be a life that expresses God and bears God’s likeness in all things. As we exercise control over the self and bear with others and with circumstances, we also need to develop godliness so that we may be like God and express Him.

----- [SECTION 2] -----

THE NEED FOR A NOBLE LOVE

In verse 7 Peter goes on to say, “And in godliness brotherly love, and in brotherly love love.” We have pointed out that in godliness, the expression of God, brotherly love, which is brotherly affection, needs to be supplied. We have also seen that the Greek word for “love” in verse 7 is *agape*, the word used in the New Testament for the divine love, which God is in His nature (1 John 4:8, 16). This kind of love is nobler than brotherly love, and it is stronger in ability and greater in capacity than human love.

The brothers and sisters in the church life may love one another, but their love may be rather superficial. In their love there may be no life supply and no “antibiotic” to foster healing. This means that their love is lacking in *agape*. But in Peter’s love for the brothers there is another element, and this element is the divine love, a love that supplies us with wisdom to love the brothers in a proper way. Sometimes we love others foolishly, in a way that can spoil them. We do not have the wisdom to love them in a way that will enable them to receive the life supply and be nourished. God’s love is not only nourishing, but also contains a spiritual antibiotic that fosters healing and prevents illness. If we love the brothers with divine love, we shall infuse such an antibiotic into them. For example, you may realize that a brother has a certain shortage or weakness. You know that teaching or correction will not help the brother. This brother needs to be loved with a noble love. If you love him with this kind of love, he will receive the life supply and an antibiotic that can kill the “germs” within him. In the church life we need to love one another with discernment, not foolishly. We need to love the brothers with the high purpose of nourishing them and helping them to be healed.

Love with Discernment

God's love is always with discernment. Matthew 5:45 tells us that God sends rain upon both the just and the unjust. But He does this with wisdom. Sometimes He may withhold rain from a certain region. This does not mean that He does not love the people in that place. He loves them, but He loves them with discernment. Likewise, we should not withhold love from the saints. We should love all the brothers, but we should love them with discernment.

Our love for the saints should also always be according to a measure or within a limitation. If we love a brother excessively, that love may spoil him. We need to love him only to a certain extent. But another brother may be in need of a greater measure of love. To love others in this way is to love them not merely with brotherly affection but also with *agape*.

Love That Is Not Dependent on Our Emotional Tide

Often our brotherly love is dependent on the tide of our emotions. When our emotional tide is high, we love everyone. But when the tide of our emotion is low, we may not be willing to show love for anyone. When the emotional tide of some brothers is high, they will do almost anything to help you. But when the emotional tide is low, they are not willing to help at all. This kind of brother loves the saints, but he loves them according to the changeable tide of his emotion. That kind of love is not *agape*. The divine love does not depend on our emotional tide. Because this love has its source in the divine life, it does not change. We need to learn to love the brothers with this divine love, not with the love that depends on the tide of our emotions.

God's love is consistent. If we love others with this love, we shall also be consistent. Whenever someone contacts us, we shall be the same with respect to our love. We shall always love others with discernment and according to their need. We may realize that one brother needs a certain measure of love. Therefore, we shall measure out, mete out, that much love to him. But another brother may need a different measure of love to meet his need. This is a noble kind of love.

We need to have this divine love in our married life and family life. Peter charges the husbands to assign honor to the wife (1 Pet. 3:7). This requires a noble love.

It is common for sisters to love their husbands emotionally and without discernment or measure. When such a sister is happy or high in her emotion, she will love her husband accordingly. But if she is unhappy or angry, she will not love him. That kind of love is emotional and does not contain the element of *agape*. However, another sister, with more experience in the Lord, will consistently love her husband and children, but will always love with a measure and with discernment. This kind of love is surely a noble love.

It is not possible for our human love to be with the proper measure and discernment. This is the reason that, after speaking of brotherly love, Peter goes on to indicate that in our brotherly love we need to develop love. Some expositors have misinterpreted Peter here and have thought that he is telling us to develop first a love for the brothers and then a love for all men. This understanding, however, is too shallow. Peter's thought is that in our brotherly love there needs to be the element of *agape*, the divine love.

MATURITY AND KINGSHIP

In verses 8 through 10 Peter says that if all these virtues exist in us and abound, they shall constitute us neither idle nor unfruitful unto the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he in whom these things are not present is shortsighted and has forgotten the cleansing of his past sins. Therefore, Peter charges us to be diligent to make our calling and selection firm by developing all these virtues.

In verse 11 Peter concludes, "For so shall be richly and bountifully supplied to you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." In this eternal kingdom we shall not be subjects—we shall be kings. But in order to be kings in the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we need maturity in life. We Christians are destined to be kings in the Lord's kingdom. However, how can someone be a king in the coming kingdom if he lacks the maturity in the divine life? It is impossible to be a king without this maturity. Even if the Lord would want to enthrone as a king someone who is not mature, that person would realize that he is not able to exercise the kingship. This indicates that even we ourselves know that we need to grow to maturity in order to be kings.

According to Peter's word in 1:5-11, to grow to maturity is to develop what we have already

received. We have been allotted the wonderful like precious faith, and this faith is an all-inclusive seed. All the divine riches are in this seed, but we must be diligent to develop them into virtue. Then we need to develop in our virtue knowledge; in knowledge, self-control; in self-control, endurance; in endurance, godliness; in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love. By developing these virtues we grow, and eventually we shall reach maturity. As a result, we shall be full of Christ, and, in Paul's words, we shall arrive at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). Then we shall be qualified and equipped to be kings in the coming kingdom.

----- [SECTION 3] -----

After a word of introduction (1:1-2), Peter speaks concerning the divine provision (1:3-21). The divine provision includes two matters: the impartation of the divine power (1:3-11) and the shining of the divine truth (1:12-21). Regarding the impartation of the divine power, we have two main points: all things related to life and godliness with the divine nature (vv. 3-4) and the development by the growth in life unto the rich entrance into the eternal kingdom (vv. 5-11). Regarding the shining of the divine truth, there are also two main points: the glory of the apostles' witnessing (vv. 12-18) and the light of the prophetic word (vv. 19-21).

REMINDING THE SAINTS

Second Peter 1:12 says, "Therefore I will be ready always to remind you concerning these things, even though you know them and have been established in the present truth." By "these things" Peter means things such as the divine power, the things concerning life and godliness, the divine nature, and the development of the divine riches in our experience. Peter was always ready to remind the saints concerning these things, even though they had come to know them and had been established in the present truth, the truth which they already possessed.

By "the present truth" Peter means the truth which is present with the believers and which they have already received and now possess. In the first section of this chapter (vv. 1-11), Peter uses the provision of the divine life for the proper Christian life to inoculate against apostasy. In the second section (vv. 12-21), he uses the revelation of the divine truth, as the second antidote, to inoculate against the heresy in the apostasy, a heresy similar to today's Modernism.

In verses 13 and 14 Peter says, "And I consider it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by a reminder, knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is imminent, even as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me." The word "tabernacle" refers to the temporal body (2 Cor. 5:1). To put off the tabernacle is to put off the body, to be unclothed of the body (2 Cor. 5:4), to leave the body, to die physically. Peter, like Paul (2 Tim. 4:6), knew that he would leave the world by martyrdom, and he was ready for this. He remembered the Lord's word to him concerning his death, when He charged him to feed His sheep (John 21:15-19).

In verse 15 Peter continues, "Moreover I will also be diligent that you may be able, after my exodus, to bring these things to mind at all times." By "exodus" or departure (the same Greek word is used in Luke 9:31), Peter means to leave the world. Once again, "these things" refer to what Peter has covered in 1:1-11.

NOT FOLLOWING CLEVERLY DEvised MYTHS

In verse 16 Peter goes on 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 became eyewitnesses of that One's majesty." Myths were superstitious stories cleverly devised in Greek philosophy, which was related to the apostasy. The apostles preached and taught concerning the power and coming (Gk. *parousia*, presence) of the Lord Jesus Christ. To unbelievers, the preaching concerning the Lord's coming sounded very much like a myth or superstitious tale. But here Peter says that the apostles did not follow cleverly devised myths when they made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

EYEWITNESSES OF THE LORD'S MAJESTY

Concerning the word "eyewitnesses" Darby comments, "'Admitted into immediate vision of the glory,' a word used for full initiation into the mysteries." Peter realizes that he, James, and John were admitted to the highest degree of initiation at the Lord's transfiguration, admitted to be the initiated spectators of His majesty. Peter considers the Lord's transfiguration as a figure of His second coming, even as the Lord did in Luke 9:26-36. The Lord's transfiguration in glory was a fact, and Peter was in it. The Lord's coming back in glory will also be a fact as real as His transfiguration, and Peter will also

be in it. This is not a cleverly devised myth passed on to the believers by the apostles.

Peter says that the apostles became eyewitnesses of the Lord's majesty. This majesty denotes magnificence, greatness in splendor, honor, and glory, even magnificent glory (2 Pet. 1:17), as appeared to the eyes of Peter and the other two disciples in the Lord's transfiguration (Matt. 17:2; Luke 9:32).

In verse 16 Peter seems to be saying, "We have told you that the Lord Jesus will come back in glory. This is not a tale or a myth. Even when He was on earth, the glory came out of Him, and He was transfigured. We saw His majesty when we were with Him on the mountain. We were eyewitnesses; we were initiated into a vision of His glory."

In this verse Peter combines the Lord's transfiguration with His coming back. This means that Christ's transfiguration is a prefigure of His coming. In Luke 9:26-36 the Lord Jesus also indicated that His transfiguration was a figure of His glory in His coming back.

In verses 17 and 18 Peter continues, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory, a voice such as this being borne to Him by the magnificent glory: This is My Son, My Beloved, in whom I delight. And this voice we heard being borne out of heaven while we were with Him in the holy mountain." Honor is a matter of position, and glory is a matter of state. On the mount of transfiguration, the Lord was in a position of honor and in a state of glory.

Peter says that a voice was borne to the Lord by the magnificent glory. This magnificent glory denotes the overshadowing cloud at the Lord's transfiguration (Luke 9:34-35), like the shekinah glory overshadowing the propitiation cover (Exo. 25:20; 40:34).

If we read the account in Matthew, Mark, and Luke concerning the Lord's transfiguration, we shall see that the magnificent glory in verse 17 refers to the overshadowing cloud. Peter, James, and John saw the cloud, and that cloud was the glory. Likewise, in ancient times, after the tabernacle had been erected, it was filled with the glory of God, for the cloud of God's glory overshadowed the tabernacle. It would have been difficult to discern the cloud from the glory, because the cloud was with the glory.

INOCULATING THE BELIEVERS AGAINST APOSTASY

This Epistle was written in the time of the church's degradation and apostasy. This apostasy was the background of this book. Peter's burden was to inoculate the believers against the poison of apostasy. Apostasy is a deviation from fundamental truth or belief. Approximately thirty years after the church had been established, apostasy began to creep in. There was a deviation from the track of fundamental belief. Certain ones were teaching heresy. One of these heresies was that the preaching concerning the coming back of the Lord Jesus in glory is a myth, a tale that is not believable or trustworthy. As we shall see when we come to chapter three, certain mockers said, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (3:4). These heretics and apostates regarded the teaching that the Lord would come back in glory to judge the earth as a superstitious tale.

The heretics at the time this Epistle was written can be compared to today's Modernists. The Modernists are a class of teachers who claim that the Bible is not inspired by God and that the miracles recorded in the Bible are merely superstitious stories. For example, Modernists do not believe that the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea in a miraculous way. Instead, some Modernists think that the children of Israel walked through shallow water, water that was made shallow by the blowing of a strong wind. In like manner, Modernists do not believe that the Lord Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. They explain this by saying that those in the crowd brought food with them and simply ate whatever they had brought. Even more serious, Modernists teach that Jesus was not born of a virgin and that He was not God. They claim that He died on the cross not for our redemption, but as a sacrifice for the kind of ism in which He believed. Furthermore, they do not believe in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In many respects, the Modernists of today and the heretics of the first century are similar.

In this Epistle Peter is giving the believers a strong testimony as an inoculation against heresy. This is the reason he points out that the apostles did not follow cleverly devised myths when they spoke to them about the coming of the Lord Jesus. Peter seems to be saying, "Don't listen to the heretics. Along with John and

James, I was an eyewitness of the Lord's majesty on the holy mountain. We were with Him when He was transfigured, and we heard the voice declaring, This is My beloved Son, in whom I delight.' What we have told you is not a legend, myth, or superstitious tale. We testified of what we have seen and heard. We saw the Lord Jesus transfigured, and we know that as He was glorified in His transfiguration, so He will come again in glory. You need to receive our word and believe it."

----- [SECTION 4] -----

TAKING HEED TO THE PROPHETIC WORD

In 1:19-21 Peter goes on to use the prophetic word found in the Old Testament to confirm their testimony. Both the apostles' witness and the prophetic word in the Scriptures are the shining of the truth. This shining is part of the divine provision, the provision God has made by His power so that His elect children may be able to stay away from heresy and apostasy.

In verse 19 Peter continues, "And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." "And" indicates that in addition to the truth of the Lord's transfiguration covered in the preceding verses as the inoculation against superstitious myths, the truth of the prophetic word is used for a more sure confirmation. After speaking of his personal experience of the Lord's glory in His transfiguration, Peter goes on to use the word of the prophets to confirm his testimony and strengthen it.

Peter indicates that the believers do well to give heed to the prophetic word. This means that they were studying the Old Testament prophecies and giving heed to them.

Peter likens the word of prophecy in the Scripture to a lamp shining in a dark place. This indicates that this age is a dark place in the dark night (Rom. 13:12) and that all the people of this world are moving and acting in darkness. It also indicates that the prophetic word of the Scripture, as the shining lamp to the believers, conveys spiritual light to shine in their darkness (not merely knowledge in letters for mental apprehension) and guides them to enter into a bright day, even to pass through the dark night until the day of the Lord's appearing dawns.

The Greek words rendered "dark place" may also be translated murky place, a place that is squalid, dry, and neglected. This is a metaphor, illustrating the darkness in the apostasy. This age is a dark, murky, squalid place. But the prophetic word is a lamp shining in the darkness.

THE DAY DAWNING AND THE MORNING STAR ARISING

Peter says that we do well to give heed to the prophetic word until the day dawns and the morning star arises in our hearts. This also is a metaphor, illustrating a time coming which will be full of light, as a bright day dawning, with the morning star, before dawn, rising in the hearts of the believers, who are illuminated and enlightened by giving heed to the shining word of the prophecy of Scripture. In the time of apostasy the believers do well to give heed in this matter so that the prophetic word, as a lamp, may shine through the darkness of apostasy until such a day dawns upon them. This will cause and encourage them to seek earnestly the Lord's presence and be watchful that they not miss the Lord in the secret part of His *parousia*, when He comes as a thief (Matt. 24:27; 2 Thes. 2:8). Hence, this metaphor should allude to the coming age, the age of the kingdom, as a day that will dawn at the appearing (the coming) of the Lord (2 Pet. 1:16) as the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), whose light will shine to break through the gloom of the dark night of this age. Preceding this, the Lord will appear as the morning star (Rev. 2:28; 22:16) in the darkest hour of the night to those who are watchful and looking for His dear appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). They have been enlightened by the shining of the prophetic word, which is able to lead them to the dawning day.

It is correct to say that the dawning of the day in 1:19 refers to the time of the Lord's coming back. On that day, the Lord will shine as the Sun of righteousness. The time that is very close to the Lord's appearing may be likened to early morning, at which time the Lord Jesus will be the morning star to His watchful believers. Although all this is true, Peter is saying something even more. Actually, in 1:19 Peter covers two matters at the same time. He is saying that the entire world is a dark place and that this present age is a dark night. If we did not have the prophecies of the Bible, we also would be in darkness, for we would not have a lamp. But the prophetic word is our lamp shining in the darkness. As we give heed to this prophetic word, we receive the

shining of the light. Eventually, this light will shine until a spiritual day dawns within us, and a morning star rises in our hearts. Therefore, Peter first is speaking of a spiritual day, a day that dawns within us. He also speaks of a future day, the day of the Lord's coming back.

Our experience confirms the fact that in 1:19 Peter is speaking both of a spiritual day and the day of the Lord's coming. Many times we were in darkness and came to the prophecies in the Bible. As we studied the prophecies, a lamp began to shine within us. Spontaneously we had the sense that no longer were we in the night but in the day, for a spiritual day had dawned within us. We have not only the shining of a lamp, but also the dawning of a day. How pleasant it is for the morning star to rise up in our hearts! Although there may be darkness all around us, within us there is a morning star.

As we have pointed out, the dawning day in 1:19 also refers to a future day when the Lord Jesus will come back as the Sun of righteousness. Before His visible coming, He will be the morning star to those who watch for Him. Therefore, Peter's word in 1:19 applies both to our spiritual situation and to the Lord's coming.

THE PROPHETIC WORD SHINING WITHIN US

If we give heed to the prophecies of the Bible, we shall experience a lamp shining within us, enjoy the morning star rising in our hearts, and have a spiritual day dawning within us. We may remain in this condition until the actual time comes when the Lord Jesus appears as the morning star and there is the dawning of day with Him as the Sun of righteousness.

First we have the shining of the prophetic word, and then this shining becomes a day dawning within us. Outwardly we live in an age of darkness, but inwardly we are full of light. We may continue to enjoy the morning star and the dawning of a spiritual day until the time the Lord appears as the morning star to the watchful ones and dawns as the Sun of righteousness.

In these verses Peter seems to be saying, "Brothers, as Jewish believers you have much knowledge of the prophecies in the Old Testament, and you have heard our testimony concerning the Lord's coming. Now some heretics are trying to tell you that this is a superstition, that it is a tale, myth, or legend. Don't listen to them, and don't accept heretical teachings. You have our testimony, and you have

the prophetic word shining within you. This prophetic word should shine within you until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

THE PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE NOT OF ONE'S OWN INTERPRETATION

In verse 20 Peter continues, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation." Here "one's" refers to the prophet who spoke the prophecy or the writer who wrote the prophecy. Literally, the Greek word for "interpretation" means loosening, untying; hence, disclosure, exposition, solution. One's own interpretation means the prophet's or writer's own exposition or solution, which is not inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. Peter's thought here is that no prophecy of Scripture is of the prophet's or writer's own concept, idea, or understanding; that no prophecy comes from that source, the source of man; that no prophecy originates from the private and personal thought of any prophet or writer. This is confirmed and explained by the following verse.

BORNE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Verse 21 says, "For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit." "For" gives the explanation of the preceding verse. No prophecy of Scripture is of the prophet's or writer's solution, for no prophecy was ever borne or carried along by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word translated "borne" also means carried along. The same word is used in verses 17 and 18. No prophecy was ever carried along by the will of man. Man's will, desire, and wish, with his thought and solution, are not the source from which any prophecy came. The source is God, by whose Holy Spirit men were carried along, as a ship by the wind, to speak out the will, desire, and wish of God.

Because the prophets were carried along by the Holy Spirit, what they uttered was not of their own interpretation or will. On the contrary, what they spoke was the will of God, the concept of God uttered by a prophet who was carried along by the Holy Spirit.

A RELIABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY WORD

Verses 20 and 21 prove that the prophetic word is altogether reliable and trustworthy. The prophecy in the Scriptures did not come from

man's opinion. This prophecy is God's word, God's speaking. For this reason, we should believe whatever is prophesied in the Old Testament. Peter seems to be saying here, "The prophecy in the Bible is genuinely of God. Therefore, it is trustworthy. Do not listen to the heretical teachings of the apostates, of those who have deviated from the track of divine truth. Instead, you should give heed to the prophecies of the Old Testament and also hold to our testimony."

As we shall see, in 2:1 Peter says, "But there arose also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." Here Peter says that there were false prophets among the people in times past and that in the future there will be false teachers among the believers. These false teachers will bring in destructive heresies. Peter's word at the end of chapter one leads him to go on to speak of apostasy in chapter two. Peter's burden was to inoculate the believers against this apostasy.