

“Removing the Guess Work”—2 Peter 1:16-18

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Removing the Guess Work”, is 2 Peter 1:16-18 → *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord* (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

Ask God questions . . . but . . . don't you dare question God! This statement may seem rather strange and even contradictory. However, it can reflect two different ways that people understand their relationship with God as they search for answers to their life questions. The statement challenges you to ask yourself this question: Am I asking God with a desire to search out what this relationship with the LORD is about as defined in His revealed Word, or am I approaching Him with

questions which challenge His authority in my life. One approaches the LORD in faith while the other approaches Him with a lot of “guess work” which demands to be reconciled in your brain by giving you the answers you want to hear.

You will be able to have some inkling about each of these approaches as you encounter the questions. When the questions are from a faith search you will encounter the person receiving the answers with gratitude, even if those answers do not satisfy logical analysis. When the questions challenge God’s ways you will discover that no answer you give will be good enough and will always leave the person in turmoil. The desire is for the Holy Spirit to lead all questions to the cross and faith in Christ’s atoning work for the forgiveness of our sins. It is there that the guess work is taken away in confession and absolution.

Peter emphatically states in our text that when it came to questions about Jesus being the Christ there was no “guess work” for him whatsoever. His point of reference was when he, James and John *were with Him on the holy mountain* at Jesus’ transfiguration. This was the point in Jesus’ earthly ministry that He resolutely headed to Jerusalem to complete His atoning work on the cross. While the guess work was not removed for Peter at the time the transfiguration took place, 35 years later Peter saw that very transfiguration as very important for verifying

the truth of His Person & Work. Why? Because after all his doubts, unbelief and bold questioning of Jesus' ways, the Holy Spirit created faith in him so he could confess with confidence in the words of verse 16 of our text: *we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The need for the Church (that's you and me) to confess with confidence Jesus as Lord is necessary because of the influence of false teachers amongst Christians. Just like the *false prophets* of old Peter describes these *false teachers among us* in 2 Peter 2:1-3 → *They 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 *false words* will lead one back into a life of doubt with a lot of guess work concerning Jesus, potentially leading to unbelief.

What is meant by *destructive heresies*? A heresy is a teaching which is not in accord with an accepted norm, in this case the written word of God. The Old Testament Scriptures determined *the way of truth* in the Person & Work of Jesus. Even these disciples' mountaintop experience with Jesus was verified by God's word. Not only were they eyewitnesses of Jesus' glory on that mountain but they were also "ear-witnesses" of it as well. Verses 17-18 of our text says: *For when He received honor*

*and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.*

Peter places before us the “witnessing credentials” of the apostles. With such “credentials” there should be no doubt about Jesus’ authority in our lives, correct? Not so fast. The devil continues to tempt us to call God’s work into question, sparking our sinful nature with false notions of becoming *like God* and making us *wise* in our own eyes (cf. Genesis 3:1-6). His desire is to start the guess work all over again in the midst of doubting God’s Word and unbelief. Satan’s basic tactic is to challenge the authority of God’s Word, thus challenging the One to Whom *all authority in heaven and on earth has been given* (cf. Matthew 28:18)—*our Lord Jesus Christ*.

It is sinful nature to question God’s authority and His ways. Submission in any way, shape or form does not come easily to sinners. In effect, the only hope for sinners is actually that which they fight so strongly when called to submit to *our Lord Jesus Christ*—confessing their sins. Because He fulfilled God’s written Word by His perfect obedience and death to atone for your sins, you now *have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention* (cf. 2 Peter 1:19). Unfortunately, in order to pay attention to it God has to break

down all our defenses in sin, along with the guess work which challenges His authority.

Certainly Job and his friends were humbled in the midst of all their guess work about why the LORD allowed Job's suffering when Yahweh fired back with His questions: *Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or Who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or Who laid its cornerstone . . .* (cf. Job 38:4-6). Those questions were intended to get Job and his friends to recognize and trust that, no matter what the situation, the LORD is still God over all. The guess work is removed by faith in Christ.

Thus, Peter looked to something far greater than his own experience and his own senses for his faith confidence. He looked to the authority to God's enduring and written Word, *the word of the prophets made more certain* (NIV). An experience so wonderful that Peter wanted to stay on the mountain and keep the feeling alive was not that to which we clung for his faith confidence. He took that experience and connected it to the written Word of God. In turn, he submitted to the meaning which the written Word of God gave to that experience. The guess work is removed by faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the basis of God's written Word.

Throughout His earthly ministry and teaching Jesus stressed the

importance of believing in Him simply on the basis on the written Word of God in the Old Testament Scriptures. Whether it was revealing Himself to people following His resurrection from the dead (cf. Luke 24:25-27,44-46); or receiving a compliment for His brilliant teaching (cf. Luke 11:27-28); or discrediting ideas that people will repent if they receive visits and warnings from dead people (cf. Luke 16:27-31), He wanted them to believe in Him on the basis of the written Word of God alone. Our desire for people to hear the Scriptures is so they hear the atoning work of Jesus proclaimed to and for them, repent of their sins and trust in His atoning work alone. Through this Word the Holy Spirit can create in them a faith understanding the Scriptures where *the fear of the LORD is **the beginning** point of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight* into salvation (cf. Proverbs 9:10). The guess work is removed by faith in Jesus Who has earned your salvation.

The Scripture is the Holy Spirit's inspired Word, God's authoritative Word for our lives (cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21). As Christ shines in your heart through the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's written Word, you will be able to live your faith confidently. You will be able to come to God with questions, not to question His authority but to seek His will in a proper relationship of submission to Him. As you seek Him **by faith in Christ**, you can be confident and grow in that faith, knowing the certainty of your salvation today based upon the Person & Work of Jesus and the

truth of God's written Word. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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