

2 Peter - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Daily Sacrifice, October 31 (1:1-2)

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”—2 Peter 1:1, 2.

“FAITH... through the righteousness of God.” This is an expression peculiar to Peter. Paul speaks of the righteousness of God by faith, which is the standing of all who believe (Rom. 3:22). But here the terms are reversed. Men are said to have shared in “like precious faith... through the righteousness of God.” God could not be righteous if He denied faith to any who sought to know His grace. That faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). If, as Scripture says, “All men have not faith” (2 Thess. 3:2), it is not because God has made it impossible for them to have it, but because they refuse to hear the Word. In His righteousness God has made faith available for all.

“Grace and peace be multiplied... through... knowledge.” The more we study God’s Word, the better we come to know Him who gave it, and our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it speaks. As we thus increase in the knowledge of the Father and the Son, our experiences are deepened and we find all needed grace for the path, coupled with an ever-deepening peace.

— Henry Williams Baker.

Daily Sacrifice, November 1 (1:5-7)

“Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity”—2 Peter 1:5-7.

THE Christian life should be one of continual growth and development. From the seed of faith there should spring all of the fruit which is so precious in the eyes of the Lord and which results in a well-rounded, spiritual experience. Saving faith is far more than an intellectual acceptance of certain revealed truths. It is to trust in Christ alone for salvation, and this will be manifested by conformity to Him. We grow as we feed upon the precious promises He has given in His Word. Every one of these fulfilled in our own experience will encourage us to confide in the Word more implicitly. To ignore or neglect the Word means a fruitless life and incapacity for service.

—John Newton.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 15 (1:16-17)

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”—2 Peter 1:16, 17.

IT is in 2 Peter 1, vers. 16 to 18, that we learn the true significance of the transfiguration. It was the coming Kingdom in miniature. Christ Himself appearing in glory was the center of that wondrous scene. In Moses we see pictured the state of those who pass through death, but will be raised in glorified bodies. Elijah pictures the living saints who will be changed and caught up to be with Christ at His coming. Then the three disciples in their natural bodies set forth the earthly saints who will enjoy the blessings of the kingdom in this world during the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus, when blessing will flow forth to all mankind from the exalted Saviour reigning in righteousness as King of kings and Lord of lords. All this confirmed the word of prophecy and made clearer to the disciples, in after days, what God has in store for His saints and the world at large when the hour of Christ’s glory shall come.

—A.S.O.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 11. Prophecy, an Outstanding Proof of the Inspiration of the Bible (1:21)

Text: “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:21).

I WONDER how many of you have ever stopped to consider the fact that the Bible is the only book of prophecy in all the world. We know there are books that many regard as sacred literature, and sometimes scholars who specialize in the study of comparative religions are inclined to put these so-called sacred books on a level with the Bible, the Word of the living God, but you can take all these other books and pile them up

on one side and put the Bible alone on the other; because of them all the Bible is the only one that is marked out as divine by the fact that it contains hundreds of prophecies uttered thousands of Years ago, yet most of which have been fulfilled letter, and others are being fulfilled at the present moment, so we may feel certain that those which have not yet come to fruition will do so eventually.

This was brought to my attention a good many years ago, at a time when as a young Christian I needed it very much. I was about fifteen years of age and had only been converted a few months and I was eager to learn everything I could about the Bible. I noticed a course of lectures on "The Bible as Literature" advertised in the papers. I arranged to attend some of the meetings and hear at least a few of the addresses. But when I went the first night I found that they were not at all what I had hoped. The lecturer, though cultured and eloquent, was really an agnostic and did not believe in the Bible as a message from Heaven. He spoke fluently of its literary appeal and all that, and I think maybe I learned a little bit from him along those lines, but he made it very evident that he considered it absurd to accept the idea that the Bible was divinely inspired. One thing he said that night troubled me very much. As nearly as I can now recall, he spoke like this: "Do you believe the Bible to be the very Word of God? If so, have you ever stopped to inquire why you hold that belief?" Then, after an impressive pause, he continued: "I will tell you why you believe it. It is simply because your parents did so before you. They taught you that the Bible was the Word of God and you accepted their teaching without taking the trouble to investigate for yourselves. If you had been born into a Hindu family, you would believe in the Vedic scriptures just as you now believe in the Bible. If you had been born into a Buddhist family you would accept the teachings of Buddha and the other Buddhist writings as you now accept the teachings of Moses and Jesus and the other biblical writers. If you had been born into a Parsee family the Zend Avesta would be to you just what the Bible is to you now. If you had been born into a Mohammedan family you would believe in the Koran as you now believe in the Bible. If you had been born into a Taoist or a Confucian Chinese family the writings of Lao Tsz or the philosophy of Confucius would have meant to you just exactly what the Bible does."

I had never heard anyone put it like that before and it troubled me as a young convert very much. I asked myself, "Is it true that after all I have a secondhand faith? Is it a fact that I am a Christian by profession simply because my parents were? Is my faith in the Bible just the same as the faith of all those other people in their sacred books?" Then I determined to investigate those books and see for myself whether they were worthy to be put on a level with the Bible.

I remember so well going up to the city library and saying to the lady at the desk, "I would like to see all the different Bibles of the world." She looked at me, smiled, and said, "My dear boy, there is only one Bible." She was a very wise woman. "But," I replied, "what I mean is I want to see the books that the people of other religions put in place of the Bible, their sacred books." She led me to a certain alcove in the library and there on a long ten-foot shelf were the great volumes containing translations of nearly all of the sacred books of the world, as prepared by Dr. Max Muller of Oxford and his associates. I read over the titles of perhaps thirty-eight of these books, so large that they resembled a file of old encyclopedias, though the paper was thick and the printing large. I said, "These are what I want." The librarian asked with a smile, "Do you want to take them all with you?" "No," I replied, "but I have three cards here, one in my mother's name, one in my brother's name and one in my own. I would like to take three of them out and when I bring them back I will take the next three, and so on until I finish them." I think she was quite amused, but I was in dead earnest. Off I went with my three great books, all I could carry, and that very night I began to read them. It took me many weeks ere I had finished the last of the set, but when I had gone through them all, ten feet of religion without the cross, I found I had learned several things, and these things have been of value to me throughout all the rest of my life.

In the first place, I found that I had the wrong idea about some of the great ethnic religions. I had supposed there was nothing good in them whatsoever, but I discovered that there were many very fine moral and religious sentiments, often expressed very beautifully. It was easy to see that some of these writers had a certain measure of moral and spiritual illumination, but as a rule the truths they enunciated were just like so many rare gems in the midst of a mass of worthless rubbish.

But, in the second place, it began to dawn upon me that I had not found in all those thirty-eight volumes one moral or spiritual truth which I did not have in the Bible already. Now this is a remarkable thing: the Bible is not a very large book and yet, think of it, in all that great mass of literature I could not find one positively true statement having to do with the moral or spiritual life that could add anything to the Bible. While I am on that, let me say another thing: many years have rolled by since the time I waded through those pagan books, but in all these additional years I have never found in any literature, a solitary moral or spiritual truth that is not in my Bible. I commend that statement to you for your careful consideration.

But now the third thing that made a tremendous impression upon me at the time, and which has meant much to me during all the years, is this: in all those great volumes there was not one definite prophetic statement that had ever been fulfilled. There were attempts at prophecy, but nothing to compare with the prophecy of the Bible, and though I was only fifteen years of age I saw then how definitely the Bible stands by itself as the only book of prophecy in the world. Then I could, say, "The lecturer is wrong; I do not believe the Bible simply because my parents believed it and taught me that it was the Word of God. I thank God that in His infinite loving kindness he permitted me to be born in a Christian home and I praise Him for the teaching of godly parents, but I can say without any hesitation, 'I believe this book because I cannot do otherwise. It carries its own credentials with it. The prophetic seal proves it to be the Word of God.'"

There are nine chapters in the book of the prophet Isaiah in which God Himself stresses this view of things. In this section God takes up the question of idolatry with His people. They had turned from Him, many of them, to the various idolatrous systems of the heathen around about them, and in these chapters we have Jehovah's controversy with idols. There are many very strong things set forth most graphic manner. Notice Isaiah's description of the making of an idol. In chapter 40 beginning with verse 18: "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved."

Do you get the irony of that? A God that cannot walk. Then in vivid contrast, "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." To whom will you liken Him? In the sublimest way, again and again he comes back to this, the greatness and the majesty of the true God.

In this section, over and over again God challenges the representatives of all the different pagan religions, the priests and prophets of these heathen systems, to prove the divinity of their religions by prophecy. Notice chapter 41, verse 21 “Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and Show us what shall happen: let them Show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught.” You see it is a challenge, as though he says, “If there is anything supernatural about your religion, if there is any divine power back of your idols, demonstrate it by prophecy. Show us things to come or go back into the past and tell us how things came to be. Explain the mystery of the creation and make clear to us its end.” They could not do it.

Then look at chapter 43, beginning with verse 9 “Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.” And to Israel he says, in verse 10: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have—Chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” That is, the history of Israel bears witness to the reality of the God of Israel, to His personality and intelligence. And then the prophet says as it were. “The proof that I am telling you the truth is that God is speaking through me. Go down through the centuries, and after I tell you of things to come, and they take place, you will have the proof of this. Ye (the nation of Israel) are my witnesses.” It makes no difference whether the people of Israel are obedient or disobedient, whether they are in the Land of Palestine or scattered among the nations; wherever they are and whatever they are doing, the history of this people is proof that God is the living God.

Some of the prophecies which this book contains have been history for 3500 years. Beginning with Moses on the plains of Moab, He there foretold the history of this people ahead of time and thirty-five centuries have shown the fulfillment of the prophecy. Israel has been acting exactly as God said they would, and the events that have taken place as Moses predicted have proven his fore-knowledge.

You have often heard the story of Frederick the Great, with which almost every lecturer on the Jews begins his address. Frederick the Great had become skeptical and unbelieving largely through the agnostic and scornful views of Voltaire, that man so brilliant and witty, trained for a Catholic priest, who turned in disgust from the superstition and the sham of it all, rejecting all belief or faith in it. Sometimes I feel sorry for Voltaire, for I realize that in his younger days he was not to be blamed for a great many things he said, for he was really a victim of circumstances. We think of his blasphemous expression, “Crush the wretch!” and then of his speech when someone mentioned the name of Jesus, “I pray you, let me never hear the name of that man again.” But he did not really know the Son of God. The Jesus he had in mind was the Jesus of the false priests of the superstitious church of Rome. Voltaire hated the religion he had found in the Roman system, and he instilled his doubts into the mind of Frederick. One day the Prussian turned to one of the chaplains and said, “If your Bible is really true, it ought to be capable of very brief proof. So many times when I have asked for proof of the inspiration of the Bible, I have been handed some great and learned tome that I have neither time nor inclination to read, some volume on the evidences of Christianity, that I could never wade through. If your Bible really is from heaven, give me the proof of it in one word.” And the good man replied, “Israel, your Majesty.” Frederick was silent.

Israel is the proof that the Bible is the Word of the living God. It is unthinkable that the history of any nation should be forecast as the history of Israel was, for thirty-five hundred years in advance, if this book is not from God.

Then to pass on—for I want you to note the challenging way in which the Lord continues to put this—read Isaiah 44:7: “And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them spew unto them.” Someone has well said, “All history is His story.” God has foreknown and foretold all in His Book, and the unfolding of history is simply but the proof of prophecy, and that is the stand that God Himself takes here.

Then turn to chapter 45, verse 11: “Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.” And chapter 46, verse 9: “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

Then chapter 48, verse 3: “I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.”

Now I have taken several verses from these chapters, 40 through 48, to lead you to carefully read the entire section and get the argument, that the Spirit of God may prepare you for the better refutation of every false religious system. You have here that which will help you when dealing with unbelievers. One of the very best ways to deal with people who say they do not believe the Bible is to ask them, “How do you explain the prophetic element in the Scriptures?”

Generally you will be answered in one or two ways: Either he will say, “I don’t believe there is any prophecy in the Bible,” or, “I don’t know anything about it.” If he says he does not believe there is prophecy in the Bible, you get so well acquainted with your Bible that you can turn to some old prophecy and ask him to explain it. If he says he doesn’t know anything about it, try to get him to go with you into a careful study of prophecy and its fulfillment. I like the method that John Urquhart uses in his “The Wonders of Prophecy.” This is the principle that he lays down for the question of proof: We will study some of the great prophecies of the Bible, and then we will turn to history to see how they were fulfilled. We will just put out of our minds all the prophecies that are found in one part of the Bible and the story of their fulfillment in another. There are a great many such prophecies. For instance, you might read Isaiah chapter 53, and then turn to the New Testament and follow the fulfillment out for yourself. Or for the Babylonian captivity, read the prophecies in Leviticus and Isaiah and Jeremiah, and then turn to the book of Daniel and others and see how they were fulfilled. But many prophecies of Scripture were not yet fulfilled when the last book of the Bible was written. It has been in the centuries since that they have come to pass, and that with the utmost particularity, exactly as predicted. This is true of the great prophecies relating to Edom, to Tyre, to Egypt and other nations. It is pre-eminently true when the experiences of the Jews for the past eighteen hundred years are depicted. Until one has carefully studied along these lines, he has no right to reject the Bible; and every one who honestly investigates in this way must, it seems to me, realize that “All Scripture is God-breathed.”

An honest person, with ordinary intelligence, who really desires to know whether the Bible is true, will soon realize that it is impossible—nay, absolutely unthinkable that prophecy and history should so perfectly dovetail into each other if a Divine mind had not given to the prophet the foresight to show things yet to come. And the God who inspired the Biblical writers is the God who gave his Son to redeem lost men.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 16 (2:1)

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”—2 Peter 2:1.

THE conflict between truth and error has been going on ever since the effort of Satan, when he successfully misled our first parents in the garden of Eden with his subtle “Hath God said?” thus insinuating doubt and questioning into the mind of Eve. Toleration of false teachers in the Church of God is treachery to Christ. The false prophets in Israel were the bitter opponents of the revelation given through holy men who wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Spirit of God. The same is true today, except that the basis for all true testimony is now the completed volume of Holy Scripture, by which all teaching is to be tested. Against all false prophets we are to oppose the faith once for all delivered to the saints, as declared in the Epistle of Jude.

—Annie Johnson Flint.

Daily Sacrifice, November 2 (3:17-18)

“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen”—2 Peter 3:17,18.

GOD has not left us to the thoughts and imaginations of our minds. He has withdrawn the veil and opened up the future to us through the declarations of inspired prophets and apostles and, most of all, through the instruction given by His own Son, who came forth from the Father and has returned to that glory which He had with Him from before the foundation of the world (John 17:1-5).

When we see in Him the Christ of God, the Eternal Son become flesh, we know we can trust His every word, and so we rest in faith upon what He has revealed. The future may still be unknown, as to many of its details, but we know Him who holds our destiny in His hands, and so we can go on in faith, free from all anxiety, knowing that He has gone to prepare a place for us, and some day we shall enter into the abode of the blessed. Whether we live on till His return or die before He comes back, we are safe in His keeping.

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