

Transfiguration Sunday

February 26, 2017

2 Peter 1:16-21 (EHV) – ¹⁶To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” ¹⁸We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, ²⁰since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

Some people define happiness as having everything go their way. Some people define happiness as obtaining everything they could possibly desire. And yet, Paul once said that he’d learned the secret to being content in every situation, whether good or bad (humanly speaking). Even more than being content, he said that he could actually *find delight* in weakness, insult, hardship, and persecution.

What is it right now – either *in* your life or *about* your life – that makes you unhappy? Is it something about your appearance? Something in connection with your social relationships? Unfulfilled goals? Unmet needs? Complacency? Living the unending rat race?

Theme: God Is Pleased!

There’s nothing overly profound about the concepts that I’d like you to glean from today’s epistle text. Quite simply, I’d like you to know that **GOD IS PLEASED. That message was carried to his Son. That message is being carried to us.**

Part I: That message was carried to his Son.

When I say that “God is pleased,” I’m not merely talking about emotional satisfaction. There are Old Testament passages that clearly indicate that God takes *no pleasure* in rote worship. He gets no emotional satisfaction when, in his holy justice, he sends an unbelieving soul to hell. There is such a thing as emotional pleasure, but the emphasis in this text is on another kind of pleasure. If you go to Baskin Robins, and the person behind the counter asks, “What’s your pleasure?” he’s not asking what kind of ice cream makes you happy. [All kinds of ice cream make me happy!!!] He’s asking what kind of ice cream you *want*. That’s how we ought to take the statement in our text. God is pleased in the sense that *his will* has been satisfied. He first of all carried that message to Jesus.

We heard in the Gospel lesson how Jesus took three of his disciples up on a high mountain and was transfigured before them. The apostle Peter wrote this second letter about 30 years after the earthly ministry of Jesus, but that event had been indelibly inscribed on his mind: **“To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.”** As a bit of an aside, the apostle John could recall the event with equal clarity, about six decades after Jesus rose into the clouds: **“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only,”** he wrote.

In this opening chapter of his letter, Peter’s gotten onto the topic of **“making one’s calling and election sure.”** In the greater context of Scripture, we know that it’s *the Holy Spirit alone* who brings us to faith and preserves us in the faith. And we know that to do that, he uses the tool of the gospel. In the verses right before our text,

Peter had spoken of the importance of keeping the gospel front-and-center in our memories. We make God's calling and election sure when we don't despise the tool he's given us to keep our faith strong.

The first part of this text, then, is a review of that very gospel message that has the power to sustain our faith. And what is that message? It's the message that God carried to his Son, and overheard by apostles, that his perfect and holy will had been satisfied thus far in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's a message that, by all means, strengthened Jesus according to his human nature. In the hymn we just sang, we heard how Jesus was about to climb another mountain – Mount Calvary. The Father's words of honor, glory and commendation gave him a firm resolve to complete the work of salvation. But the words carried to Jesus are also for our benefit. Just think what it means for you that God is well-pleased with his beloved Son, Jesus.

First, by way of contrast, go ahead and consider for a moment whether or not God is well-pleased with you. Is he emotionally satisfied with where you're at on spiritual level? When he looks upon your thoughts, words and actions, is he happy? Worse yet, when he looks upon your thoughts, words, and actions, can you claim to have satisfied his perfect will? And it's just not enough to say that God's disappointed in us, is it? In his holiness, God hates all who fail to meet his standards. In his justice, he condemns all who, in their sinfulness, fall short of his glory.

The sole human exception, of course, is Jesus. The only standard with which God is pleased is perfection. And throughout every nanosecond of his 33 years in the flesh, Jesus lived up to that standard. Nothing had changed in that regard in the 3 years since his baptism, when the Father spoke those exact same words. If anyone earned God's favor, it was Jesus.

There's still a bit of a disconnect, though. The simple fact that Jesus was good enough to earn God's commendation doesn't give us any bit of satisfaction, knowing what's in store for all those who fail. But Moses and Jeremiah in the Old Testament and Paul and James in the New connect the dots. Jesus is *our* righteousness. God undeservedly *credits* Jesus' righteousness to our accounts, by means of his gift of faith. Therein lies the comfort. When you hear the Father say of Jesus, "**With him I am well-pleased,**" you can have full confidence that he says the same of you. That's the good news that Peter wants the recipients of his letter to constantly remember.

Transition

The way we approach Scripture is of great importance when it comes to this whole matter. Through it, God continues to carry his message to us.

Part II: That message is being carried to us.

Remember the context of these verses. Peter was imploring them to remember all the truths that he and the other apostles had passed on. And these truths weren't a bunch of manmade myths that they'd fabricated to gain a large following. No – just as God spoke to his Son on the mountain, God still speaks to New Testament believers through his own divine words: "**We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.**"

Maybe you recall the NIV translation of verse 19: "**We have the word of the prophets made more certain.**" That wording implies that Peter found a greater degree of certainty in what he saw with his eyes and heard with his ears. Up on the mountain, he'd seen Jesus' divinity and majesty and he'd heard the Father's approval. We also appreciate it when words are backed up and confirmed by empirical evidence. But the EHV translation in your bulletin is probably more accurate, considering the verses that follow: "**We have the**

completely reliable prophetic word.” Or just taking the NIV’s words and switching them around: **“We have the more-certain word of the prophets.”** In that sense, Peter’s saying that just because he personally witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration, we shouldn’t feel that we’ve somehow missed out or that things aren’t as certain for us 2,000 years removed. The words of Scripture are even more reliable than sights and sounds. All by itself, Scripture – the word of the prophets – is completely reliable. It needs no external evidence to back it up, but testifies to its own genuineness. Faith convinces us that Scripture is true and credible.

Just as Jesus testified to the inspiration of the Old Testament, Jesus’ apostles testify to the inspiration of the New. Paul says that **“all Scripture is God-breathed.”** Peter says here in the text that Scripture isn’t a product of the human will, but of the Spirit’s carrying. Even more, Paul says that *each and every word* was given under the Spirit’s direction. That’s why we call it *verbal inspiration*. And then, because of that, we can ascribe other words to Scripture. It’s *inerrant* (without error), since God cannot err, and *infallible* (fail-safe, reliable), since God cannot fail.

So, Peter encourages us to **“pay attention to”** Scripture, much like the Bereans of old, who examined it daily. Since Scripture testifies of our salvation through Jesus, and since Scripture itself makes us wise for salvation, and since the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, we would do well to heed the invitation to **“let the word of Christ dwell in us richly as we teach and admonish one another... and sing... with gratitude in our hearts to God.”**

Consider yourself invited – and not just by me, but by God’s inspired apostles – to become (or remain) a regular student of the Word. Look for an opportunity every single day to reacquaint yourself with Bible history. Meditate on those words and apply them to your own life as you **“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,”** through the working of the Holy Spirit. Then also, find an opportunity to come together with your brothers and sisters in one of our Bible classes so that you might encourage and be encouraged.

As Peter says, we live in a **“dark place.”** The word “dark” doesn’t just refer to lacking in illumination. It refers to a “dark and dreary” place that’s miserable to be in. That’s an accurate description of this world of sin that surrounds us. But we have the light of the gospel of Jesus. God’s **“word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.”** It **“shines through the gloom and points us to the skies”** until we can finally travel to the city that needs no sun or moon or lamp, because Jesus, the Lamb of God himself, illuminates it with his own radiance.

Conclusion

Dear friends, God is pleased with his Son and, therefore, with you, through faith in him. Cherish the tool of the gospel that keeps your faith strong unto life everlasting. Amen.