One of the most famous, coveted signatures in the world is that of Elvis Presley. Collectors clamor to have any piece of memorabilia that has Elvis’s signature on it. A napkin, a menu, a personal letter, official documents, anything that bears his signature are all coveted pieces to Elvis fans. Elvis’ popularity also means that his signature is the most faked and forged signature in the world. *How you would be able to tell whether it’s the authentic Elvis or a fake version?* People have studied Elvis’ signature and can point out unique characteristics of his real signature that the copies and forgeries often miss. For example, Elvis rarely dotted the “I” in his name, so if you his autograph with a dotted I, it’s likely a forgery. There are factors that help experts authenticate the validity of a particular piece and distinguish it from the forgeries.

*How do you know that the Christian faith is not a forgery?* If you’re a Christian in the room, you hold your faith incredibly close. It is the most valuable part of who you are, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, of infinite more worth to you than an Elvis autograph. *How can you have confidence that the Christian faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the words of the Bible, is the authentic truth?* After all, there are various other religions who claim to have the truth. And the secular worldview often espouses that the Bible is no more than a book of fairy tales, certainly not literal, universal truth. We are surrounded by false teaching in the world and sometimes in the church, so how can we have confidence to hold fast to our faith as the truth?

If someone were to ask you “how do you have confidence that the Christian faith is true? Why can you trust the things that the Bible says?” how would you respond? If you’re not sure how to answer that, my aim is to help you to answer those questions this morning from 2 Peter 1:16-21. **Like the work of authenticating Elvis autographs, there are certain, powerful, factors and characteristics that authenticate our Christian faith and the gospel of Jesus Christ as THE truth.** **Our faith is not a blind faith that lacks any form of evidence, but rather these factors should give you assurance that your faith is not a forgery, but the authentic truth of God. In the face of false teaching, you can have complete confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ as the truth.**

**2 Factors that Authenticate Our Faith in the Face of False Teaching**

1. **The Clear Witness of the Apostles (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”***

For connects back to what’s come before. So far in chapter 1, Peter has started his letter encouraging his readers to supplement their faith with virtue, calling them to holy living, characterized by certain qualities that are in keeping with their faith in Jesus Christ. In v. 12, he says he wants to remind them of these qualities, though you know them. Peter says you know the truth of the Gospel and how to live a holy life, now continue in that. They’ve heard and believed the truth of Peter and the apostles’ message.

So our passage builds logically off of v. 12. You’re established in the truth that you have. You have the truth because we came to you proclaiming the truth. **What we DIDN’T do is come with cleverly devised myths.** We came to you speaking the truth, not lies. The idea behind this phrase “cleverly devised” in Greek is “wisely concocted” as if Peter and the apostles sat around trying to think up the most plausible story to try to convince people of their message. Let’s come up with a really good myth that people will follow. If we twist the Scriptures this way, it’ll convince some people. Peter says our message wasn’t some made-up story that just sounds good, but it was the truth.

*And what was the message they proclaimed?*

***“when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”***

The apostles’ message was that Jesus, the Lord, is coming back. This is speaking about Jesus’ second coming, because the word for “coming” here is used 24 times in the NT, always to refer to the second coming of Jesus. Even Jesus himself uses it to refer to the coming of the Son of Man. Clearly some big part of their message was Jesus will return again and this time he will come with power. We could translate the phrase “power and coming” as “powerful coming”. In Jesus’ first coming, he came to die as a sacrifice for sin. In Jesus’ second coming, he will come in power to judge sin.

**The return of Jesus Christ and the coming judgment against sin is motivation for holy living today.** Jesus will come back at any time, so serve him today. That’s why Peter has been urging towards holy living so far in chapter 1. So here in v. 16, Peter says “we told you the truth when we told you that Jesus is going to return in power in his second coming.”

Worth stopping for a minute to consider: *Why would Peter feel the need to defend himself saying “we didn’t follow cleverly devised myths”?* **Because there were false teachers going around, likely making this exact accusation against Peter and his fellow apostles.**  There are people coming into the community and saying “Listen, this message about Jesus’ return happening soon is nothing but a myth. There’s no way that’s gonna happen.” If you’d go ahead and read the rest of 2 Peter, he spends a lot of time talking about these false teachers who are peddling this teaching that Jesus isn’t going to come back.

**2 Peter 3:3-4 (have people look there)**

From creation to today, things are the same as they’ve always been. There’s no sign of his coming, therefore he’s not gonna come back. These false teachers have leveled the accusation against Peter that this teaching about the imminent second coming is nothing more than a myth. A clever one, one that seems wise, but nothing more than a myth.

*How can Peter know that this message is the truth? How can his audience be confident in the apostles message about the second coming?*

“***but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty”***

The gospel of Jesus Christ isn’t a myth because we saw it with our very eyes and heard it with our very own ears! We witnessed his majesty and glory for ourselves. We’re just telling you what we saw. This wasn’t some third-hand message Peter passed down to them, but it’s based on their very real experience. *How were they eyewitnesses of his majesty? What did they experience?*

**V.17-18**

***“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 and the apostles were eyewitnesses to all of Jesus’ ministry and saw several incredible things, but Peter highlights one moment here: the transfiguration. If you don’t know the story, Jesus takes just 3 of his disciples Peter, James, and John up on a mountain. **(Matthew 17:2-3 slide)** These disciples get a picture of Jesus’ divine glory. In this moment, these men were allowed to see bevond his human form into his full majesty and glory. How awesome would that be? Beyond words. Peter, in this moment, doesn’t know what to say, so he offers to set up 3 tents, one for Jesus, and one for Moses and Elijah. **(Matthew 17:5-7 SLIDE)**

Here we get the events that Peter recounts in 2 Peter 1. The Majestic Glory of 2 Peter 1 is the Father, speaking from the cloud. Peter says the voice is from heaven because he identifies the source of the voice. This was not an earthly voice. And clearly, the disciples are shaken by this. They fall on the face in terror and can’t lift their eyes until Jesus comes and gets them. They have beheld Jesus in his glory. **Peter, in this letter, says “you want to know how I know Jesus will return in power and glory? I was on the mountain to witness the transfiguration! I saw Jesus’ face shining like the sun! You can’t make me unsee what I saw on that holy mountain**!” This isn’t some story that Peter heard from a friend of a friend. This is eyewitness testimony of the power and glory of Jesus in the transfiguration, which is a preview of Jesus in his return. Peter got an eyewitness glimpse of the glorious Christ as he will be on that great day.

And this Transfiguration experience was far from the only time Peter and the apostles were eyewitnesses to Jesus’ majesty. They were next to him as he performed miracle after miracle, calming the raging seas, causing dead people to rise. They were there when the resurrected Jesus appeared to them and showed them his nail-scarred hands. This is not some other Peter Parker or Peter Pan writing this letter. Peter’s not the only apostle who talks about what he’s seen and heard.

**1 John 1:1-3 SLIDE**

**“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”**

**We can trust the Scriptures account of Jesus because it was written by eyewitnesses during the time of other eyewitnesses who could have refuted it**. If Jesus really hadn’t risen from the dead and His disciples started claiming that he did, all it would take is the Roman authorities to exhume the tomb and show Jesus’ dead body right there. But they didn’t! Because they couldn’t!

**1 Corinthians 15:3-6 SLIDE**

It’d be one thing if one person said “Hey, I saw a resurrected Jesus.” You may be able to dismiss it as a hallucination. It’d be another thing if 12 disciples said “Hey, we saw the resurrected Jesus”. It’d be harder to dismiss a group all saying they witnessed the exact same thing. But what if a group of 500 people “Hey, we all saw the resurrected Jesus appear to us.” You can’t dismiss it as a mass hallucination. That’s not a real thing. Either they’re all lying and have done a masterclass in keeping their story straight, or it really happened.

These aren’t myths made up to tell a good story and promote a new religion for a get-rich quick scheme. There were eyewitnesses and people who spoke to the eyewitnesses telling what they saw and heard directly from Jesus. They saw him transfigured, they saw him die, they saw him resurrected. These apostles, eyewitnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, often died in brutal ways, killed and martyred for their message that they refused to recant. **The apostles eyewitness accounts are a powerful authenticator of the Christian faith.**

The Christian faith may face accusations from false teachers and secular people. How can you believe these fairytales? It’s all a made-up story. Or these stories have good moral principles, but they’re not literal and true. But these accusations against the Scriptures and the Christian faith show a real lack of understanding of the faith. **The gospel of Jesus Christ is attested by human eyewitnesses who saw, who heard, who touched, this glorious Jesus.** Other religions do not have this large group of eyewitness testimony to back up their claims. The events of the Book of Mormon were not witnessed by anyone, except the supposed author, of whom there is no historical record. Islam is the collection of supposed revelations of God to Muhammad, and Muhammad alone. Only the Bible has the evidence of hundreds of eyewitness testimonies concerning its events, written by men who historians know really existed.

Eyewitness testimony is a powerful way to authenticate our Christian faith, but Peter doesn’t stop there. His readers don’t need to have the mountaintop transfiguration experience in order to have confidence in the gospel, rather there’s a second factor that authenticates their faith in the face of false teaching.

1. **The Sure Words of the Scriptures (V.19-21)**
2. **Confirmed Prophecies (19)**

**“And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”**

Not only do we have eyewitness testimony, but we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed. Now what does that even mean?

Prophetic word – speaking about the prophecies of the OT scriptures. The Old Testament is FULL of prophecy. You flip back to a random page in the OT and there’s a good chance it’s got some sort of prophecy. Peter may have particular Scriptures connected to the second coming of the Messiah in mind, but he’s speaking generally about the entire Old Testament.

But what does it mean that we have the OT prophecies “More fully confirmed” – word for confirmed could also be translated as “sure, certain, or firm.” So, “we have the OT scriptures more certain.” At first glance, it seems like Peter is saying “the OT prophecies are **better** than the eyewitness testimony.” But I don’t believe that’s what Peter is communicating. He’s not comparing the two and pitting one as better than the other. Rather the sense is that the word of prophecy itself has been made more sure **because** of what has taken place in the Transfiguration!

The OT prophecies are the all the more trustworthy and reliable because of how we’ve seen Jesus fulfill so much of it perfectly. We could devote an entire sermon series to unpacking all of the OT prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, but Peter’s point is to say seeing the Transfiguration makes the OT prophecies of Jesus’ second coming all the more certain. We’ve seen Jesus fulfill all of these other prophecies perfectly, we have absolute certainty he’s going to return like he said he would.

*How does Jesus’ fulfillment of prophecy authenticate our faith?*

Many Bible scholars would say that Jesus fulfilled over **300 different prophecies from** the OT. In one person. In his life of 33 years. That’s roughly 10 prophecies fulfilled a year. This is not a blind faith we follow. We follow the mountain of evidence of confirmed prophecies in the person of Jesus Christ. We would be fools not to follow him! And the Biblical authors tell us that Jesus fulfilled a prophecy, they weren’t making this up after the fact to fit a narrative. It’s not like the gospel writers were making Jesus out to be someone He never claimed to be. Jesus himself says that he fulfills OT prophecy.

**Luke 4:16-21 (People can turn there)**

Jesus fulfills all of the prophecies about the Messiah, written hundreds of years earlier.

What should we do in light of confirmed prophecies? How then should we live?

**“to which you will do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place** “

Pay attention to the Scriptures. Keep the faith. The word for “do well” is “fitting” It’s fitting that in light of the reliable, confirmed OT prophecies, you conduct yourselves in a certain way. Don’t lose sight of what is to come. Jesus is coming back, so live all those days in light of that. The word for “pay attention” is also used in Hebrews 2:1.

**Hebrews 2:1 SLIDE**

Pay attention to Jesus, lest we drift away. And that’s the same danger I think Peter senses at stake for his readers. If you don’t take heed to the Scriptures, you’re gonna be tempted to drift away. Give heed to those prophecies, devote yourself to them, attach yourself to them, cling to them and don’t let go, lest you drift away from Christ. I think the analogy of the lamp shining in a dark place is especially helpful. If you’ve ever walked around in total darkness, you know how much you depend on even the dimmest flashlight. The light becomes your lifeline. You pay attention to it! You don’t let your eyes wander away from it. In the face of false teaching, keep your eyes on Jesus. He is the light of the world. In the midst of the darkness of this world, keep your glues on the gospel. He is the light that we must fix our eyes upon.

*How long do we need to keep ourselves paying attention to the Scriptures?* “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”. That is to say, until Jesus returns or calls us home.

What keeps us paying attention to the Scriptures? Why should we stake our lives on these prophecies from an ancient book written thousands of years ago? To keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we have this to know this: **the Bible is not just another religious text, it’s the very word of God**, **divinely inspired.**

1. **Divine Inspiration**

**V. 20-21**

**“knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. “for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Sprit”**

None of the prophecies of the OT were from the prophet’s private interpretation. That’s the best understanding of the phrase “someone’s own interpretation.” There are some churches whose leaders will dictate doctrine to its members and people are not free to really study the Bible for themselves. They will use this passage as Biblical proof, saying that Scripture can’t be interpreted by individuals, we the church to interpret it for you. That’s not what this is saying at all. **This means that the prophets did not speak of their own accord.** They weren’t writing prophecies independent of anyone or anything else. That’s what v. 21 says “no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man.” They didn’t sit down and say “time to produce some prophecy! Let’s see what happens!” The false teachers were likely arguing these are human authors, writing whatever they wanted to write. Peter directly refutes that charge from the false teachers, saying the OT prophets did not speak completely on their own. They did speak, it was their words, their mouth, their pens. But they were accomplishing exactly what God intended them to say. He was directing their steps.

**“Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**

The prophets spoke from God. It was their words, but God speaking through them. Biblical prophecies are not Nostradamus predictions, where you make enough predictions about the future, you might get one right every once in a while. The Scriptures are not just another religious text. They’re not a human book about the Christian faith. We have plenty of those and they can be wonderful! But the Scriptures are wholly different. They are the word of God. The words of the Bible are not man’s words, they are God’s truth written by men. In what way?

The Bible language of “carried along” is fascinating. The Greek word translated as “carried along” is “Phero” from which we get our English word “ferry.” We could that all of the Biblical writers, in their writing, were ferried along by the Holy Spirit and arrived at the same destination.

“One has to imagine these writers as cars aboard a ferry. Each one got on the ferry – each one appeared to be doing his own thing – each one delivered his own distinctive word. But at the same time the owner of the ferry – in this case, God – made sure they all landed together at his port of call because he carried them to their destination on the ballast and strength of his Spirit.” – **\*DAVID HELM SLIDE\***

This is the doctrine of **divine inspiration. We say that the Bible is divinely inspired.** In the context of this letter, Peter is referring to prophecy, but 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that **ALL Scripture is God-breathed.** Every word of the Scriptures is God-breathed

*Divine inspiration is not “divine dictation.” God did not dictate the exact words to the Biblical authors and they were copying down what God said.*

*Divine inspiration is not like Peter held up his pen and it magically floated onto the page and started to write words that Peter had no control over.*

In divine inspiration, God influences and directs the human authors to communicate exactly what God would have them to communicate. Peter does the work of writing this letter of 2 Peter, God, by his Spirit is governing over the entire process. It’s Peter’s words, written in the Greek language, using his unique style. But God is governing, *superintending,* over the writing of His word and accomplishing exactly what He intends. In this way, all of the Bible is the word of God.

What this means is that there are roughly 40 human authors of the Bible, but one divine author of it all. *The Holy Spirit is the divine author of all Scripture*. If this doctrine is true, then it has profound implications for our faith.

Tied inextricably with the doctrine of divine inspiration is the doctrine of inerrancy. The Holy Spirit is the divine author of all Scripture, therefore all of Scripture is the truth. It is impossible for God to lie. God does not deceive. In its original manuscripts, the Bible is without error.

So when you read the Bible, you are reading the divinely inspired, inerrant word of God. God speaking to you through the work of these human authors. You can trust it, build your life upon it. How does divine inspiration authenticate your faith? **In the Scriptures, we read the gospel message**. That we were guilty before God in our sin. That God sent His Son, Jesus, to die as the sacrifice for our sin, offering us forgiveness through His blood. That we are invited to repent of our sin and believe in Him and be cleansed completely. That one day Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead and bring his saints home to glory with him forever. And because this is the work of the divine author, without error, containing all truth, **you can bank your life on the truthfulness of this gospel.**. Our faith is backed by eyewitness testimony and the sure words of the Scriptures.

**What does this mean for our lives?** We’re going to be tempted, like Peter’s readers, to turn towards another gospel. As Christianity grows less and less popular, we may be tempted to fit in with the cultural crowd. You’ll hear skeptics scoff at what you believe and call you foolish. Some “Christian” teachers may deny clear Christian doctrine and embrace false teachings. You may see friends and family members who once claimed to be believers reject Jesus and follow a path of sin. These kinds of moments are testing to your faith. It can shake your faith and make you ask questions like “why do I believe this?” In those moments, remember 2 Peter 1. Our faith is not a blind faith. Our faith is backed by eyewitness testimony and the sure words of the Scriptures. **One day, when Jesus returns and brings you home to glory, your faith will be vindicated.** Until he returns, keep your eyes on Jesus. Let the gospel of Jesus Christ and glory of God be your vision until you draw your final breath. **Then your faith will be made sight to enjoy the presence of your Savior for eternity. When we stand before the Savior face to face, we will see that this salvation was not a fraud, but it is the richest treasure in all the world.**