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Go and make disciples!

E-votional 65

Interpretation

2 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV)

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 Spirit.

When reading the Bible, it can at times be very confusing and other times it can be life-altering and transformative. I have to admit, there have been times in my life when I was reading the scriptures and just couldn't seem to make any sense at all of anything written therein. And there were other times when the words leaped off of the page and into my heart bringing about great revelation and understanding to my inner man. Even those we consider great in the faith have these same struggles from time to time. I would like to share some words from Billy Graham that I wrote down while watching a documentary called 'An Extraordinary Journey' (2018), concerning a time in his life that took place in the summer of 1949,

'I remember many years ago, I went through a struggle intellectually about the Bible. And I was concerned and worried and battling with myself. And I remember going out in the moonlight out in the forest. And I took this Bible and I said Lord, I don't understand all about this Bible. There are many things I cannot explain. I remember laying the Bible out on a stump. And I said Lord, this is Your book. I'm going to accept it by faith like I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and He saved me and changed me and transformed me. I am accepting this is Your word by faith.'

I really think that this passage of scripture should be given great priority in principle when we seek to determine the meaning of the prophetic scriptures as well as scripture in general. What I mean is that there is no doubt, many different ways of deriving meaning from something, yet not all are equally helpful. Let me explain, Peter, in this chosen passage, says, "*knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.*" So, for Peter,

this was of first importance in this particular context, to reveal that the way to interpret scripture does not come from someone's own interpretation. That being said, he is effectively saying that we cannot understand scripture on our own. But again, to clarify, it does not mean that we won't get a glimmer of understanding in some way to what is being said throughout the passages. Yet at the same time, what we are getting may not be the correct interpretation.

A common school of thought amongst Christians is, however, that true interpretation comes by and through God through His Holy Spirit. We call this many things, such as revelation, inspiration, or even quickening where the Word of God is brought to life within us because of abundant revelation given by God Himself. This does not mean that I can correctly interpret without that kind of help or assistance from God. We could even attempt to teach each other the Bible apart from this, but what we will get is partial or even untrue interpretation.

Along these same lines, I would like to add that I personally have undergone a lot of ministry schooling and have a B.A. in leadership and ministry, yet even in this experience, there was a lot more hype driven to mechanical training when it came to Bible study and interpretation of scripture rather than on relying on the Holy Spirit. I really had a hard time with the methods they proposed were good for study and interpretation as they were not always teaching true inspiration by the Holy Spirit. The methods they proposed at times actually confused me more than anything. The thing about it that caused me confusion was trying to use my logic and intellect to reason through the scriptures to arrive at some interpretation or understanding. Now, I am not advocating the removal of logic and intellect in the equation because there can be some amazing insight given when logic and intellect are empowered by the Holy Spirit. But to think that these methods were being practiced apart from inspiration of the Holy Spirit left me confused every time. Very simply, I am a firm believer in full reliance on the Holy Spirit. I just want to clarify that my entire schooling experience was not all like this, some of my classes encouraged the work of the Holy Spirit. However, a lot of my school experience was more on the human reason side of things rather than the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says this in John 16:12-13 (ESV)

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Praise the Lord! When I read this, it literally encourages me to rely upon Him even more still. In our chosen passage of scripture, Peter says this also, "*For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*" Since scripture or prophecy was never

produced by man, how can we then interpret it? The truth is we need the same Holy Spirit who wrote scripture and prophecy to give us the interpretation.

I am reminded of something A.W Tozer (2014) wrote about this,

"If we were to place less emphasis upon scholastic education and more upon the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we would be a wiser, holier, more powerful church than we are now."

Now, I am not advocating that all of a sudden through the Holy Spirit that we are all just going to arrive instantly at a great spiritual height. What I am saying is that we are to grab a hold of this principle by faith and so persevere in it and the process will grow us from one degree of glory to another. When we begin to rely on and allow the Holy Spirit to be our guide and teacher in this way we will begin to grow and learn in ways that we never could have otherwise.

Thank You, Father, for Your great work of salvation, it is truly a full package deal with every facet covered. Only Jesus is our battle cry! Father, we need nothing else but Jesus. Thank You that You have provided everything we need to walk in the full inspiration and expression of Your love, wisdom, and power through the Holy Spirit, whom You poured out richly upon us. Yet still, we can struggle in this flesh when we try to figure everything out in our own strength. Give us a new and heightened faith that truly believes that You want us to know and understand and interpret Your will and word for our lives, in Jesus name.

Tozer, A.W. (2014) Preparing for Jesus' return, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House

Graham, Billy (2018) An extraordinary journey, documentary.

In Christ's Love,
Chris and Jeanne
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