

### 1 John 1:1-7 (New Revised Standard Version)

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

### 2 Peter 1:1-2, 16-21 (New Revised Standard Version)

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 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 had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

A few years ago, when Kathy and I visited New Orleans,  
one of the highlights of the trip for me was WW II museum  
where the focus is to remember and keep that history alive.

In one section of the museum there are rows of small listening booths  
where you can hear recordings of veterans recounting their stories  
and describing their own experiences, because they were there.

There is something very powerful and inspiring about an eye-witness  
telling about an event that they themselves saw, heard and touched.

It is for similar purpose and reason that the author of 1<sup>st</sup> John  
begins his letter by explaining his experiential knowledge of Jesus  
based on remembering what he personally heard, saw & touched,  
from having traveled with Jesus during his earthly ministry.

The author emphasizes, that it’s his own eyewitness testimony, vs. 1-3

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- this life was revealed, and we  
have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and **was revealed to**

**us-- we declare to you what we have seen and heard ...**

This passage was written several decades after Jesus had ascended.

Some, having waited such a long time for his promised return  
felt discouraged and drifted toward questioning and doubt  
that perhaps the stories about Jesus weren't really true.

By then, many who had been alive to walk with Jesus in Palestine,  
to personally see and hear him during his earthly ministry  
had been killed as martyrs and others were dying of old age.

John, who was one of that last surviving witnesses still alive,  
wrote the Gospel of John and these three epistles of John

**to be sure that those who followed, got it right!**

John's not speculating on events that someone had told him about,  
but he was drawing upon his own experiences and observations.

So based on the author's personal experience with Jesus,  
he wants to help those early Christians get back on track.

To further explain and clarify the true mission of the Church,  
John uses a favorite metaphor that he also used in his Gospel,  
the coming of Jesus as the light against the darkness, vs. 5-7.

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...*

Our call is to be the Church, the body of Jesus Christ  
a faithful community of **authentic Christian living & loving**,  
that reflects light of God's grace out into the world.

Our call is for the way we live to be like a stained-glass window,  
through which God's love and grace shine visible out to other people,  
**as Christian fellowship happens as we walk together in that Light.**

I used to have and use a solar-powered calculator.

If you covered the photocells, it would darken and stop working.

Our walk with God operates in much the same way.

**Simply put, darkness is being cutting off from the True Light.**

John wants his readers to understand that by the choices we make,  
we walk in the Light and allow God to transform us, or we don't.

And what are some ways that we choose to cut off the Light? **My list:**

Skip worship, a dusty Bible, neglected prayer-life, jealousy,  
lack of fellowship, complacent about serving, focus on self,  
lack of gratitude & self-examination, retaining a grudge...

The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter was also a late addition to the New Testament.

These early Christians were expecting Jesus to return fairly soon,  
and having endured severe persecution and an unexpected long delay,  
some were doubting the apostles' teaching about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming,  
even suggesting that somehow the disciples got it wrong.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter text doesn't specify exactly what was going on,  
except that false teachers were also denying the divinity of Christ,  
and referring to teachings about Jesus as "cleverly devised myths."

Peter is adamant that Jesus is indeed truly the Son of God,  
because Peter was present at the mountaintop Transfiguration,  
where & when God himself testified to the divinity of Christ.

Peter is insistent that he personally observed & experienced  
the familiar face of Jesus his friend, his appearance changed  
in a way that clearly revealed the light of his divinity.

He saw Jesus shining brightly and speaking with Moses and Elijah,  
and in fact, James and John also saw all of that with him, vs. 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 had been **eyewitnesses** of his majesty.

For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the  
Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." **We ourselves** heard this voice  
come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

Peter's point --- don't try to pass this off as cleverly devised myth.

I was there – I know what I saw, what was said and what was done.

just as I know that Jesus will be coming back as promised.

Jesus in glorified form was a foretaste of when he returns in glory.

This is my eyewitness and truthful testimony, which I know

because I was there at the mountain of transfiguration with Christ,

where we all heard God's own voice declare:

"This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Most modern scholars and even skeptics who oppose Christianity,

generally, will all agree that Jesus lived and was crucified,

but then claim the early church created the stories about Jesus

and that what we read in the Bible isn't necessarily accurate.

They write articles suggesting that the actual Jesus of history

was different than the Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament,

and that lacking the enlightenment of our modern knowledge,

the disciples meant well, but didn't understand well enough.

But it seems to me, both foolish and terribly arrogant to claim

that centuries later, we can know more and understand far better

than the eyewitnesses who were physically present to see it,

than those who personally observed the actual event happen,

and were inspired by God to describe in their writings of Scripture.

For me, one of the most compelling and convincing arguments

in favor of **absolute trust in Scripture as truly God's word**,

is the life-testimony of those early Christians...

...the contemporaries who knew and had traveled with Jesus,

**who were so totally convinced that the gospel is the truth.**

There is no historical doubt that Christians were willing martyrs

prepared to die even an agonizing, cruel and terrible death,

rather than deny their faith in Jesus Christ their Lord, vs. 19.

So we have the prophetic message **more fully confirmed**. You will do well to be attentive to this

as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

That is the heart and point of this passage and Peter's message,

**that the eyewitness testimony of the disciples of Jesus  
and the Spirit-inspired witness of Scripture  
are all truthful and from God through the Holy Spirit...**

... and certainly not of human imagination or interpretation, vs. 20-21.

First of all, you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but **men and women moved by the Holy Spirit** spoke from God.

The word, "moved" as in **men and women moved by the Holy Spirit**  
derives from a nautical term used to describe  
how the sails of a boat are moved or blown by the wind.

In both languages, Hebrew and Greek,  
the word translated **wind**, is also the word for **breath and Spirit**.

The power of the **wind** is the language and image Peter uses  
to describe the way God inspired the writers of Scripture,  
**God in partnership with human authors** to record what God wanted us to have.

That means that the authorship of the Bible was through  
the Holy Spirit of God working through human beings.  
So in a mysterious way **God's own word** was written down by mortals,  
not as human typewriters, but like light shining through a window.

The written word of God is powerful enough to change lives,  
and to motivate the reader, by drawing us closer to the Lord.  
Therefore, **Scripture** is God revealing and speaking to humankind.

It is the truth that transforms as a blessing given by God,  
and if Scripture truly is the true and inspired word of God,  
then it is also our reliable guide that we are called to obey,

even when it's not easy or in line with the ways of this world.

Also, it's not for us to judge Scripture by our standards of reason,  
nor by the shifting values of our culture & human understanding,  
but rather every aspect of our lives judged by God's truth,  
and for God's truth to direct and guide the lives we live.

That means we can read and study with confident assurance and trust  
that God does speak, inspire and reveal truth through Scripture...

... as with grace the Lord blesses and transforms our lives  
toward faithfulness, peace, holiness, joy and purpose.

**God's word is our reliable guide that we're call to obey  
as the Holy Spirit to leads and guides the lives we live.**

While I was traveling in the Middle East,  
on the way to visit an ancient sultan's palace and museum,  
we had to pass through crowded alleyways of the marketplace.

Since none of us had any idea of direction or where we were going,  
our guide held up his red baseball cap, waved it and said,  
**"Just follow this, and you'll end up in the right place."**

If I had tried to navigate my way through the crowd on my own,  
without staying focused on following the guide's red cap,  
I would have gotten hopelessly lost and never arrived.

Or if I hadn't learned to recognize his red baseball cap  
as different from all the other red hats and turbans,  
then I still would have gotten hopelessly lost.

God's word and Holy Scripture are something like that ---

- we have focus on following God's word

- we have to know the Bible well enough  
to recognize its truth and message so we can tell  
if someone is trying to twist or distort its truth.

We have to stay focused on the truth of God's grace,  
for if we move away from the Gospel as it's written and revealed,  
then we will lose sight of who Jesus really is,  
and distracted, we will get lost, losing our way...  
**... for it's the authority of God that speaks through Scripture.**

I was discussing who Jesus is with another pastor on-line one time,  
and in response to something she wrote, I responded to her error  
by quoting several Bible texts that contradicted her opinion.

When she replied, she didn't accept the Bible as reliable authority,  
I recognized that we really had no common ground of understanding.

If the Jesus we follow  
is not the same as the Jesus that we read about in the New Testament,  
then I believe that is almost certainly a false Jesus  
of our own making, self-understanding and imagination...

**... for if I truly want to know and walk the Jesus in truth,  
then there is no other Jesus that we can believe & follow  
other than the Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture...**

...for to follow Jesus apart from the witness of the New Testament  
isn't following the true Christ who leads to our salvation,  
and to the abundant and blessed meaningful life  
that the Lord our God intends for his children.

If you believe the Bible is just some stories that people made up,  
then of course you can deny and reject its teaching,

make up & decide your own truth, beliefs & behavior.

**But on the other hand, if the Bible does really come from God,  
then that calls for us to submit, follow & obey what is written.**

Our hope is that through the process of Christian discipleship,  
and through our experience of **God's gracious love and presence**,  
we will grow deeper & closer to God through our walk with Jesus,

and that having chosen to walk closer and deeper with the Lord  
that by the influence of God's grace and Spirit within us,  
**that we will live lives more faithful and righteous.**

In agreement with Peter, as in 1<sup>st</sup> John, and drawing on Psalm 119,

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning **the word of life**— This is the message we have  
heard from him and proclaim to you, **that God is light ...**

**... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**