

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

2 Peter 1:16-21

An Open Mind Is Opened to Close on Something True

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” The Apostles preached and wrote what had been seared into their eyes and stuffed into their ears for safekeeping. And their testimony, not violence or politics, turned Rome and the whole known world on its head and raised up a Church against which the gates of hell have raged without success. To dismiss that testimony is to consider them either too dumb or too shrewd. But how can those who spread a gospel that changed the world be considered dumb, and how can those who would rather die than change their testimony be considered shrewd? A dumb man’s testimony would hardly stand for a few seconds, let alone for generations, and a shrewd man would gladly surrender his testimony to save his life. No, Peter writes, “We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

But how can a book written by so many men be so certain, so trustworthy and reliable? “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.” No prophet ever just sat down and said, “I think I’ll write a book of the Bible.” The Holy Spirit led them to write. “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,” St. Peter continues, “but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” The word for “carried along” can also be used to describe a sailboat carried along by the wind. It remains a sailboat, but it moves at the wind’s direction. So also, each prophet and apostle remained himself, with his own unique personality, experiences, and way of speaking, but the Holy Spirit directed him, so that, just as nothing could tear Christ from the cross by which He saved us, so also, nothing would tear Him from the Scriptures in which that salvation is made known.

Some would snidely object that such a belief shackles the mind and puts up suffocating fences to reign in thought, but nothing could be further from the truth. The skeptic lives in a shackled world, a world of natural laws and scientific theories that cannot be broken without shattering his reality. But what law cannot be broken? Laws are made precisely because they can be broken. The speed limit is not really a limit; it’s a law. Your car doesn’t die at 70, unless you’re driving my Geo Metro from college. The plane goes up, but doesn’t come down until it’s good and ready. It tells gravity, “Not now.” Why can’t God do the same? The Christian’s mind does know boundaries, boundaries to keep it from the insanity of ungrounded thought or the danger of misguided thought, but those boundaries are much wider than the boundaries of the skeptic, which mark everywhere God has stepped “no trespassing.”

The skeptic analyzes a miracle to refute it. The believer analyzes a miracle. The skeptic reads the Scriptures to disprove them. The believer reads them. The skeptic

comes to the Lord's feast convinced the food is rotten. The believer comes to taste and see. The skeptic would have you prove gravity to him before he keeps his feet planted. The believer is content not to jump off the gym roof. The skeptic says the sun must rise because it always has. The believer basks in its light and admits he's not the one to give such a great light orders. The skeptic looks to make the world smaller according to his understanding. The believer lets it grow bigger the more he understands. The coursework is greater with each grade level in school, as the more we learn the more there is to learn. Should the same not be true with the things of God, including His creation?

Faith watches life like a movie. Reason without faith would handcuff the plot. Faith uses reason. Blind reason banishes faith. We might call the man who believes in unicorns a fool, but he could rightly call us fools for denying something simply on the grounds we've not seen it. I've never seen air. I breathe it. I've never seen Idaho. Isaiah's stuffed his potatoes up his nose. Who made my eyes the judge of something's existence? Say what we will about the man who believes in unicorns, he's not the close-minded one.

A world without the unexplainable is a sorry world; even the noble heathen recognized that. We humans, limited as our knowledge is, create better video games and movies than the world the skeptic would attribute to God. While the believer is willing to meet God as He is, the skeptic wants to make God squeeze through the narrow door of his mind before sitting down to talk. If faith is unreasonable, reason without faith is the most unreasonable thing of all, for it expects truth to be more rationale than real, more obvious than mysterious, more accommodating than whole, before it will buy it, like a fat man faulting the size small shirt when it doesn't cover his gut.

"We have the word of the prophets made more certain." God forgive us for hiding it under a pile of dust, for calling it murky when it is clear on something we don't want to hear, for considering it insufficient when it answers the questions worth asking but not every possible question. God forgive us for knowing the words of Beatles, Eagles, Monkeys, Snoop Doggs, Chili Peppers, Pussycat Dolls, All American Rejects, Wreckers, or Dixie Chicks better than His own! God forgive us for mistaking the Bible as just another book on the bookshelf, just a convenient place to scribble the family history, or as some sort of tedious textbook! God forgive for viewing His revelation as a prison fence and not a doorway to the His infinite mind, full of countless treasures and timeless truths.

God forgive us, and there is only one place to look to see if He does, and we need not look hard. Simply flip ahead to the next mountain on which we find our Lord in the Gospels and hear Him cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Hear His death sigh, "It is finished." "You are forgiven," the open Word declares. Now never close it. Rather, close your mind on it, because, when you do, you become open to the whole world, to the whole realm of possibilities, to a God bigger than the door upon which He knocks. After all, an open mind is not one that never closes. That would be a useless mind, good only for letting the breeze blow in one ear and out the other. An open mind is opened to close on something true. Instead of buying some wind chime

earrings, stuff something solid in there. “ We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it.” Amen.