

II Peter 1:12-18 - The Apostolic Witness to the Doctrines of Godliness

Tuesday, February 19, 2013
9:48 AM

Introduction

A. From big to little: how does our passage today fit into the whole of II Peter

1. The Big Picture: Premise of II Peter
 - a. Dangers will not only come from outside the church but also inside the church. Therefore we should guard against these by knowing the true gospel. The true gospel is marked by godliness and is found in Scripture. A gospel that denies godliness or disregards the promises of God or twists Scripture must be rejected. God will judge such things and will protect His church. Since the judgment of God is imminent, we must be diligent now to make our calling and election sure by pursuing righteousness and godliness.
2. II Peter 1: The Gospel is Marked by Godliness
 - a. Making your calling and election sure - godliness and the gospel go together (1:3-11)
 - b. Be reminded of these things - godliness is defined in Scripture (3:12-21)
3. II Peter 1:3-11: Godliness and the gospel go together
 - a. In verses 3-4, Peter argues that godliness and the gospel always go together because God has provided power for godliness in the gospel
 - b. In verses 5-7, Peter gives eight qualities that display godliness.
 - c. In verses 8-11, Peter exhorts us that these qualities are absolutely necessary to the believer.
4. II Peter 1:12-21: Godliness is defined in Scripture
 - a. In verses 12-18, Peter shows us that the apostolic witness exhorts us to grow in godliness
 - b. In verses 19-21, Peter shows us that the prophetic witness exhorts us to grow in godliness

B. Read II Peter 1:12-18

C. The message this morning is going to be a little different than the last several weeks

1. This message is going to be more doctrine oriented than the past several weeks
2. Over the next two weeks we're going to consider some of the doctrine of Scripture
 - a. How was Scripture written?
 - b. Why was Scripture written?
 - c. How can we tell what is Scripture?
 - d. Is Scripture authoritative and why?
3. These are things you might study in a Bible class, but I think they are important to think about and they are what Peter guides us to as we continue on in II Peter
4. But, these doctrines are not without application. We must remember as we go through this passage that Peter is trying to clarify the difference between sound teachers and false teachers. So, in each point we'll do two things:
 - a. I'll give an explanation of what I mean in each point
 - b. I'll consider how this doctrine helps us distinguish false teachers from sound teachers
 - c. At the end, then, I'll not only apply these doctrines to teachers but to all of us - how should these doctrines affect our lives?

D. Peter's theme for II Peter 1:12-18 is that the apostolic witness, the New Testament, exhorts us to godliness

1. Proposition: We should judge both teachers of the church and ourselves based on their and our handling and response to the New Testament.
2. Outline:
 - a. Purpose of the Apostolic Witness
 - b. Location of the Apostolic Witness
 - c. Authority of the Apostolic Witness
 - d. Power of the Apostolic Witness
 - e. Applications

I. Purpose of the Apostolic Witness

Verse 12-15 - *Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

A. The purpose of the apostolic word is to encourage us to grow in godliness

1. Peter's teaching is meant to stir us up in godliness
 - a. Verse 12 - *Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities*
 - b. Verse 13 - *I think it right...to stir you up by way of reminder*
 - c. Verse 15 - *so that...you may be able to recall these things*
 - d. Chapter 3:1-2 - *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles*
 - e. What Peter is reminding them of and stirring them up to and making sure they recall are the attributes of godliness in verses 5-7!

2. All of the apostles' teaching is intended to stir us up in godliness
 - a. Paul
 - i. Ephesians 4:1 - *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*
 - ii. I Timothy 6:3-4 - *If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.*
 - b. John
 - i. I John 5:13 - *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.*
 - ii. I John 5:2-3 - *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*
 - iii. I John 5:18 - *We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

3. Why is there so much doctrine, then?
 - a. As we look at the New Testament especially, there are large chunks of the New Testament devoted wholly to doctrine - those things that we should understand and believe
 - i. Some people would use statement to drive a wedge between doctrine and godliness
 - ii. If the purpose of the apostolic witness is to encourage us to grow in godliness, should we be diligent, even divisive, to make sure we believe the right things? Or should we just try to become better people as we read the Bible? Is there a contrast in Scripture between doctrine and godliness? Is theology useless arguments as some people would claim?
 - b. Paul spends the most time discussing the interaction between doctrine and godliness, especially in the pastoral epistles
 - i. Paul speaks often of the necessity of careful attention to good doctrine
 - A) I Timothy 4:6 - *If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.*
 - B) II Timothy 1:13-14, 2:2 - *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

- C) II Timothy 4:1-4 - *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*
 - D) Titus 2:2 - *But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.*
 - ii. Paul also speaks often of the necessity of growing in godliness
 - A) I Timothy 4:7-8 - *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*
 - B) Titus 2:11-14 - *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*
 - iii. Paul tells us what the relationship of godliness and doctrine is
 - A) I Timothy 6:3-4 - *Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.*
 - B) Titus 1:1 - *Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,*
- c. Conclusion: doctrine and godliness always go together
- i. Godliness must be built upon right doctrine
 - A) This is what Peter did in verses 3-4 - he founded his book on deep, true doctrine which forms the basis for his call for godliness in verse 5-7
 - B) Godliness that is not built upon right doctrine is usually some form of legalism - it may look good from the outside, but it is not founded on the work of Christ
 - 1) I Timothy 6:5 - *He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*
 - 2) II Timothy 3:5 - *having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.*
 - ii. Doctrine must lead to godliness
 - A) This is Peter's point for the rest of the book - you can judge a teacher based on what his teaching leads to
 - 1) If it is leading to godliness then he is a sound teacher
 - 2) If it is leading to licentiousness than he is a false teacher
 - B) I Timothy 6:3-4 - *If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.*
 - iii. Lacking either is contrary to Scripture
 - A) Godliness without doctrine denies what Christ has done for us and is merely moralism
 - B) Doctrine without godliness denies the purpose of what Christ has done for us and is merely licentiousness
4. So, the purpose of all of the New Testament, of all of the apostolic witness, is to exhort us in godliness, even the more heavily doctrinal sections - because right doctrine is the necessary basis of all godliness

B. Therefore, sound teachers will use the Scriptures to remind us about things we already know in order to firmly establish us in the truth

Verse 12 - *Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.*

1. If the purpose of the apostolic word is to remind us and stir us up in the attributes of godliness, then sound teachers will stick to the things we already know
 - a. This is a good reminder for me personally
 - i. Especially when I first started preaching I constantly desired to teach something new, something that you didn't already know so that you would learn something.
 - ii. But, on more than a few occasions, as I reflected on what I was bringing it was very evident that I wasn't teaching you anything that most of you didn't already know.
 - iii. As I ponder this, I realized that this was actually a good thing - I'm not up here necessarily to teach you new things, although perhaps occasionally you will learn something you didn't know, instead I'm up here to remind you of the things you already know and to exhort you to them.
 - b. When teachers stick to the basics of the faith and don't strive after new, innovative theological formulas, we guard ourselves against being swept away by our time, our culture or by other false teachers
 - c. So, my aim, when I am up here teaching is not to introduce new truth to you - in fact, if you 'learned' nothing new from me while I was preaching, that would be fine with me
 - i. Instead, I hope to remind you of those things you already know - or at least should already know. I hope to exhort you to grow in godliness through right doctrine.
2. Paul commanded Timothy and Titus to focus on the established truth and not to follow silly myths
 - a. I Timothy 1:3-7 - *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.*
 - b. Titus 3:8-9 - *The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*
3. Paul and John also used their teaching to remind us of the things we already know
 - a. Ephesians 4:20-24 - *You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*
 - b. II Corinthians 1:12-14 - *For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and acknowledge and I hope you will fully acknowledge--- just as you did partially acknowledge us--- that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.*
 - c. I John 2:7 - *Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.*
4. So, sound teachers will stick to reminding you of the things you already know - they won't be continually trying to teach new things, the old things are sufficient
 - a. The truths of Christ that lead to godliness have been known for two thousand years. Any good teacher will follow these and not be drawn away after other things.

II. Location of the Apostolic Witness

Verses 13-15 - *I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

- A. The location of the apostolic witness is in written down in the New Testament
1. Peter left a written record of his teaching
 - a. Peter's mission was to make sure the church understood these things
 - a) Verse 13 - *I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder,*
 - b) Peter's mission, as long as he was on this earth was to stir the believers up according to the teachings of Christ
 - c) This is what we just considered above as the purpose of the apostolic witness
 - b. Peter understood that he was not going to always be with the church
 - a) Verses 14 - *since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.*
 - b) This is a reference to the story we have recorded in John 21
 - c) John 21:18-19 - *Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."*
 - c. So, Peter left us a written testimony of the apostolic witness
 - a) Verse 15 - *And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*
 2. This is the basis of the New Testament canon - the New Testament canon is recognized as those books which were written by an apostle (or close associate) for the teaching of the church
 - a. The apostles were promised inspiration from Christ, through His Spirit, to teach the church
 - a) John 14:25-26 - *"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*
 - b) Matthew 10:18-20 - *and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*
 - b. The apostles wrote down their teaching
 - a) This is obvious as we look at the New Testament - these are the writings of the Apostles
 - i) Matthew was written by the Apostle Matthew
 - ii) Mark was written by John Mark who was a close associate of the Apostle Peter and is considered written by Peter's authority
 - iii) Luke and Acts were written by Luke who was a close associate of the Apostle Paul and are considered written by Paul's authority
 - iv) John, I, II, and III John and Revelation were written by the Apostle John
 - v) Romans through Hebrews were written by the Apostle Paul (although there is some disagreement on Hebrews, but I won't go into that today)
 - vi) James and Jude were written by James and Jude the brothers of Christ who were close associates of all the apostles
 - vii) I and II Peter were written by the Apostle Peter

- b) Even in their writings, though, we see that the Apostles were consciously writing down their teachings to be kept
 - i) Later in chapter 3:15-16 - *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*
 - ii) I Corinthians 14:37-38 - *If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.*
 - iii) John 21:24 - *This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.*

c. These teachings are compiled as the New Testament

- a) Historical Theology (Gregg Allison) - *To the collection of authoritative Hebrew Scripture were eventually added some additional writings in the form of gospels, a historical account, letters, and an apocalypse (a revelation of future events). Some of these writings themselves pointed to an expansion of the canon of Scripture. For example, Peter spoke of the letters of the apostle Paul in the context of "the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3: 14– 16), and Paul himself connected a saying of Jesus ("The laborer is worthy of his wages") with Deuteronomy 25: 4, referring to both as "Scripture" (1 Tim. 5: 18).*

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A crucial question arose: Which of the writings from the early church should be included in this expanding canon— consisting of both the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament) and the New Testament? (Irenaeus was the first to call the two parts of this collection the Old and New Testaments.) The letters of Paul, written by an apostle clearly invested with divine authority, were easily recognized as belonging to canonical Scripture. But what about the anonymous letter to the Hebrews? Why should Mark and Luke be placed alongside the gospels written by the apostles Matthew and John? And what about the Letter of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, two very early writings that enjoyed widespread circulation in the early church?

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The church turned to defining the canon of Scripture. Two key criteria emerged to determine which writings to include in the canon: (1) apostolicity: Does this writing have an apostle for its author (e.g., Paul's letters, the gospels of Matthew and John)? If not, is an apostle associated with this writing (e.g., Mark's gospel records the account of the apostle Peter)? (2) antiquity: Has the church historically recognized the voice of God speaking to his people in this writing? Although equipped with these criteria, the church did not set out to determine the canon of Scripture as much as to recognize and affirm those authoritative, inspired writings that God intended for inclusion in his Word.

B. Therefore, sound teachers will continually be in the New Testament and will consistently be teaching from the New Testament

1. Again, Peter is not merely giving us doctrine of Scripture in this passage, but he is teaching us what a sound teacher should be like and I think we can see two things that a sound teacher will be like in this passage
 - a. A sound teacher will diligently study the New Testament because this is where the apostolic witness is found
 - b. A sound teacher will consistently teach the New Testament because this is where the apostolic witness is found

2. A sound teacher will continually be in the New Testament
 - a. I Timothy 4:16 - *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*
 - b. Paul called Timothy to keep a close watch on the teaching. A sound teacher will pay careful attention to the apostolic teaching that is found in the New Testament. He will not merely know it, but he will continually be reminding himself of the teaching of the apostles so that he can teach well according to their teaching.
 - c. So, you can judge your teachers based on whether they are continually and constantly immersing themselves in the apostolic teachings. We have the teachings in the New Testament - do your teachers devote themselves to these?

3. A sound teacher will consistently be teaching from the New Testament
 - a. I Timothy 4:13 - *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*
 - b. II Timothy 4:1-2 - *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*
 - c. Paul also called Timothy to read and teach and preach the Scriptures. A sound teacher will not only immerse himself in the New Testament but will also seek to immerse his hearers in the New Testament. When I say this, I'm not implying that a sound teacher teaches from the New Testament as opposed to the Old Testament (next week we'll see that a sound teacher will also teach well from the Old Testament). What I am implying is that a sound teacher will be bound by the teaching of the New Testament when he teaches. He will not teach things that are not in accordance with the New Testament and the authority for his teaching will always flow from the New Testament.
 - d. So, you can also judge your teachers based on whether they are consistently teaching from the New Testament. Do your teachers bind themselves to the apostolic teaching when they teach?

III. Authority of the Apostolic Witness

Verses 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 were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 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.*

A. The authority of the apostolic witness is based on eyewitness encounter with Christ

1. Each of the apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ
 - a. Peter refers here specifically to his, James' and John's witnessing of the transfiguration recorded in Matthew 17
 - a) Verse 18 - *we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.*
 - b) Matthew 17:1-8 - *And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.*
 - b. Paul also refers to his and the rest of the apostles witness of the risen Christ
 - a) I Corinthians 15:7-8 - *Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*
 - c. John refers to his eyewitness of Christ in both his gospel and his epistles
 - a) John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
 - b) I John 1:1 - *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*
 - d. Peter and John answered the Sanhedran based on their eyewitness of Christ
 - a) Acts 4:19-20 - *But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."*
2. Because they were specially chosen by Christ, the apostles were eyewitnesses specifically of Christ's majesty
 - a. Peter says in verse 16 - *we were eyewitnesses of his majesty*
 - b. Peter, James and John saw the transfigured Christ
 - a) We just looked at the account of the transfiguration
 - b) It is probably impossible for us to understand how glorious that event was, but it obviously made a profound effect on Peter
 - c) When he was on the mountain, he starts speaking gibberish he is so awed
 - d) When he considers that he was an eyewitness of Christ's majesty, he thinks back to the transfiguration where he saw the majesty of Christ revealed and heard God's direct testimony about Him
 - e) So, Peter can rightly say that he was an eyewitness specifically of the majesty of Christ
 - c. Christ revealed Himself to all of the apostles after he rose from the dead
 - a) Again, we just considered this in I Corinthians 15
 - b) Paul points at the apostles seeing the majesty of the risen Christ
 - c) They didn't merely meet Christ once, they were eyewitnesses of His resurrection
 - d) So, all of the apostles can rightly say that they were eyewitnesses of the majesty of Christ

- d. Most importantly, though, Christ opened their eyes so that they understood His majesty correctly
 - a) This is important, because there were others that also saw the risen Christ - Paul mentions at least 500 brothers whom Christ appeared to. If the authority of the apostles rests merely on their witness of Christ's resurrection, then we should give this same authority to all of the witnesses.
 - b) But, the apostles were set apart from all the other witnesses because Christ not only appeared to them in His glory, but He also revealed to them His glory and gave them His Spirit that they might correctly understand His glory
 - c) John 14:25-26 - *"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

- 3. The apostles told the truth about their witness
 - a. Peter claims in verse 16 - *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 - b. Some people, even some who would purport to be within the church, would claim that the apostles were uneducated men who could not distinguish truth from error or fact from myth. The apostles were merely products of their society who believed in irrational things like miracles.
 - c. In response to this, though, Peter makes a direct statement.
 - a) Peter understood the difference between myth and fact
 - b) Peter understood that there could easily be myths that were produced about Christ
 - c) And Peter claims that he is not writing down myths but he is merely testifying to the truth
 - d. The claim of the apostolic witness is that it is truthful - real historical fact
 - a) So, as we approach the New Testament we only have two choices
 - b) We can either believe the apostles
 - c) Or we can call them boldfaced liars
 - d) In my estimation, it is clear that they were telling the truth - the apostles gained nothing from lying

- 4. This is the basis of the apostles authority - they knew, understood and faithfully reported the things about Christ
 - a. They knew, understood and faithfully reported Christ's actions in the gospels
 - b. They knew, understood and faithfully reported Christ's teachings in the epistles

B. Therefore, sound teachers will continually be pointing us back to Christ through the apostolic witness

- 1. If the authority of the New Testament is based on eyewitness of Christ, then a sound teacher should continually be pointing back to Christ in his teaching
 - a. When a teacher is teaching about the attributes of godliness, he should base these on Christ and His work
 - b. When a teacher is teaching doctrine, he should show how this doctrine flows out of Christ and His work
 - c. This is why the first distinctive of our church says:
 - a) *We covenant together to ... build this church solely on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ, keeping the gospel central, the source of all activities and messages of the church. We will strive to participate as a church in the proclamation of the gospel and the baptizing and discipleship of all nations.*

- 2. So, you can judge a teacher based on whether they consistently point back to Christ. Do they continually show how their teaching flows out from Christ and how their teaching points back to Christ? Or do they take snippets of Scripture and teach things without having any reference in Christ or His gospel? A sound teacher's teaching will consistently be based in the power and work of Christ, be exhorting to the sanctification of Christ, and be pointing to the glory of Christ.

IV. Power of the Apostolic Witness

Verses 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 were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 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.*

A. The power of the apostolic witness is derived from Christ's power

1. Peter's witness made known to us the 'power and coming' of Christ
 - a. Peter's witness is not merely that Christ came but that Christ came in power
 - b. Christ's power was demonstrated in His transfiguration
 - a) Mark 9:1 - *And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."*
 - c. Christ's power was demonstrated in His miraculous works
 - a) Luke 4:36 - *And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"*
 - d. Christ's power was demonstrated in His crucifixion
 - a) I Corinthians 1:18 - *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
 - e. Christ's power was demonstrated in His resurrection
 - a) Romans 1:4 - *and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord*
 - f. The power of Christ is proclaimed through the gospel
 - a) I Corinthians 1:17 - *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*
 - b) I Corinthians 1:23-24 - *but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*
 - g. When Peter testifies to Christ, he is testifying to this Christ - the Christ who came with power into this world to save sinners
2. Peter has already taught that the power of Christ is the basis of godliness
 - a. Verse 3 - *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*
 - b. So, the power that Peter witnessed as an apostle of Christ is the same power that enables us to live godly lives, that transforms us in sanctification
3. So, the power of Peter's witness is based on the power of Christ - Peter's words are powerful because they teach us about a powerful Lord

B. Therefore, sound teachers will always encourage us to grow in godliness only by Christ's power worked out in our lives

1. If the power of the apostolic witness is the power of Christ, then teachers will be careful to proclaim the power of Christ in their teaching, which means that the sound teacher will root all of his teaching in the gospel of Christ
 - a. I Corinthians 1:17 - *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*
 - b. I Corinthians 1:23-24 - *but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*
 - c. Romans 1:16 - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*
2. So you can judge a teacher based on how he calls you to godliness. Does he call you to rest on Christ's power in the gospel and fight with Christ's power for godliness? Or does he proclaim a gospel with little power - a Christ who does not care if you are sanctified or not? Again, does he base all of his teaching out of the gospel? Or does he call you to do good works in your own power?
3. You can see that this guards us against both legalism and licentiousness. If the power of the gospel is the source of godliness then it can neither be legalistic, because it based in the gospel, nor can it be licentious, because its end is godliness.

V. Applications

- I've applied these doctrines of Scripture - the purpose, location, authority and power of the apostolic witness - to teachers and called you to judge whether a teacher is sound or not by seeing how he represents and reacts to these.
 - But these doctrines are not only for sound teachers, they are for all of the church. So, as we close, I want to call you to four things based on these doctrines - four applications to go with four points.
- A. If the purpose of the apostolic witness is to exhort you to grow in godliness, then use the New Testament to fight for sanctification.
1. Study Scripture
 2. Meditate on Scripture
 3. Memorize Scripture
 4. Use Scripture to Grow
- B. If the location of the apostolic witness is in the New Testament, then devote yourself to studying the New Testament.
1. Often times it is easy to spend time reading good books about Christ and listen to good sermons and then lose time for studying the Scriptures directly
 - a. These aren't bad things
 - b. You won't find anyone who is more ready to recommend a good book or tell you to go listen to a good sermon than me
 2. But, those are secondary things - even the best books are no match for Scripture
 - a. So, go read good books, listen to good sermons
 - b. But make sure that you spend time in Scripture, that you study the apostolic witness of the New Testament
 3. In other words, be like the Bereans
 - a. Acts 17:11 - *Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*
 - b. Don't be content to listen to other's study of the Scriptures, search out the Scriptures daily yourself to see if these things are true
- C. If the authority of the apostolic witness is eyewitness encounter with Christ, then seek to see the glory of Christ in the New Testament.
1. II Corinthians 3:18 - *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*
 2. It is the beholding of Christ's glory that transforms us from one degree of glory to another
 3. So, do not be content with mere cursory knowledge or study of the New Testament
 4. Instead, seek to see the glory of Christ in every word of the New Testament
 5. And as you do, look for growth in godliness as you understand more and more of the glory of Christ
 6. Ephesians 4:2 - *Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love.*
 - a. Why?
- D. If the power of the apostolic witness is the power of Christ, then seek God in prayer to fill you with Christ's power through the gospel for godliness.
1. I've come back to this application in every sermon, but it's because it's so important
 2. Christ's power is what pervades II Peter 1, Christ's power is what we need in our lives
 3. So, seek Christ's power in your life. Be in consistent, continual prayer that Christ's power would be evident in your life.