

## Don't Forget to Remember

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2 Peter 1:12-15

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Verses 12-15 serve as Peter's purpose statement for his letter. Peter doesn't want us to forget to remember the glorious truths of God's Word. Martyn Lloyd Jones said, "There is nothing more characteristic of [human] life than our tendency to forget." We forget what we ought to remember and remember what we ought to forget. Peter wants to make sure that we never lose sight of the glorious truths of the gospel.

*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. 2 Peter 1:12-15*

### **1. YOU NEVER GROW OUT OF YOUR NEED TO BE REMINDED OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH. (v. 12)**

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

What is Peter saying here? He's saying, "In light of the magnitude of the truths that I have communicated to you, in light of the eternal consequences of their application in your life, I intend to always be about the business of reminding you of these qualities (things - NASB). Paul said the same thing in Philippians 3:1 when he wrote, "To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you." The goal of every faithful shepherd is to teach God's people what they ought to know, and then to continually remind them to live in light of what they know. To beat the same drum over and over and over so that the truth is firmly planted and bears fruitful application. Just as faith without works is dead (James 2:17), so knowledge without application is just information. God's intention is not just that we would have right knowledge, though that is invariably important, but that that right knowledge would produce the fruit of right living.

Peter understood that there is a distinct difference between being aware of truth and possessing, or living by, truth. I'm sure that each of you can remember a time where as a student you sat in a classroom and thought to yourself, "I don't need to take notes, I will remember the material." But what happens when you move from the lecture hall to the exam hall? Now faced with questions that require your ability to reproduce information, though you learned the material, you are troubled to

recall it. Jesus reminded His disciples in John 13:17, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." If we fail to exercise our knowledge, if we aren't reminded to live in light of the truth which we once learned, it will fall into the place of distant memory, and like a handful of sand will slip through your fingers having no bearing on your daily life.

What truths (things) has Peter reminded us of already in the first 11 verses of his letter?

- We are servants of Christ (v. 1)
- Our faith is a result of the righteousness of Christ (v. 1)
- Jesus is both God and Savior (v. 1)
- Jesus is Lord (master) (v. 2)
- God has granted to us everything we need for a godly life (v. 3)
- God called us, we didn't call Him (v. 3)
- God has given us incredible promises in the gospel (v. 4)
- We have been freed from the captivity of the world's corruption (v. 4)
- We have a responsibility to diligently grow in Christlikeness (v. 5-7)
- God desires that our lives be increasingly effective and fruitful (v. 8)
- We have been cleansed (purified) from our former sins (v. 9)
- As we grow in grace we can enjoy the assurance of our calling and election (v.10)
- There is an inconceivable welcome awaiting all of those who persevere in godliness (v. 11)
- The entire letter is full of things that we must not forget!

The word "remind" here has the idea of bringing to the front of your memory. This is the reason that we build monuments and memorials. They are erected for the purpose of remembrance. When we stand before the Vietnam and World War Memorials we are reminded of the men and women who gave their lives to help preserve our freedoms. When we stand before the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, and Jefferson Memorial we are reminded of the good leadership that God has graced our country with. When we stand before the Liberty Bell we are reminded of our independence. When we stand before the 9/11 Memorial we are reminded of the injustice of terror, the tragic loss of human life, and the pulling together of our nation.

Peter is reminding us that the truths of God's Word aren't just meant to be tucked away in the file cabinet of knowledge, but rather they are meant to be continually in the forefront of our minds – influencing our daily lives. Unfortunately, we can get accustomed to truth and begin to take it for granted. It's for that very reason Peter says, "I intend always to remind you of these things." Why was Peter so intent on keeping the truth in front of us? I think for two primary reasons: 1. Peter had been charged by Jesus Himself to feed and tend to His sheep (John 21:15-17). He undoubtedly wanted to be a faithful shepherd. 2. Peter knows that eternity is near and our lives are teetering on its edge. Whether or not a person has a true knowledge of Christ (v. 3) will determine where he will spend eternity; that is why in verse 10, he encouraged us to make our calling and election sure.

It's important to note that the shepherd isn't the only one with the responsibility to remind you of truth. You need to be reminding yourself of truth! One of the best ways to keep truth in the forefront of your memory is to meditate on God's Word. Joshua reminds us, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" Joshua 1:8. Similarly, Moses charged the Israel to remember God's Word in Deuteronomy 6:4–9 saying:

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

#### **THE BIBLE CLEARLY AND REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZES THAT WE ARE TO REMEMBER TRUTH:**

*Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. Exodus 13:3*

*So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. Numbers 15:40*

*Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, Deuteronomy 8:11–14*

*Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, "The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land." Joshua 1:13*

*Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. Isaiah 46:9*

*Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Malachi 4:4*

*In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35*

*But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God. Romans 15:15*

*This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians 11:24–25*

Peter's tone here is that of encouragement. He doesn't say, "I intend to remind you of these things because these truths aren't seeming to sink into your thick heads." Rather he says, "I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have." Peter acknowledges the fact that they are knowledgeable and established in the truth. What are we to learn from this? Even the most knowledgeable and established Christians need motivation and exhortation. There never comes a time in the Christian life where we can say, "I got this...I know that already." There is always room to grow, there is always room to apply, and that means that our need to be reminded of the truth won't cease until we shed this sinful flesh.

We need to be reminded of truth every time we sin. Every time we sin we have believed a lie. Paul gives us the brass tacks theology behind every sin in Romans 1:25 when he says, "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator." We need truth drilled into our hearts and minds. Keep in mind that this all falls in the context of false teachers who are introducing destructive heresy into the church (2:1). The answer to the false teachers and their destructive heresies wasn't a new teaching, but rather a correct understanding of the old teaching. We need to be continually reminded of truth so that we are not "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" Ephesians 4:14. Spurgeon said:

*We are not merely to preach new truths which people do not know, but we are also to preach the old truths with which they are familiar. The doctrines in which they are well established are still to be proclaimed to them. Every wise preacher brings forth from the treasury of truth things both new and old; new, that the hearers may learn more than they knew before; old, that they may know and practice better that which they do already know in part.*

Peter not only acknowledges that they are knowledgeable, but also that they are established in the truth. "Established" has the idea of being steadfast, settled, immovable, and fixed. In Ephesians 1:13 Paul says, "When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him,

were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." God established you at your conversion. Not only are we established in Christ, but we are also being established in Christ.

Peter was encouraging the believers about what was irreversibly true, but at the same time saying, "Don't settle in; don't get comfy and complacent lest you begin to waver." Peter knew well the dangers of wavering. He was convinced that he was established in his love and loyalty to Jesus. It was Peter that told Jesus with confident resolve that he was ready to go with Him both to prison and to death. But Jesus knew that Peter, even with the best of intentions, would wobble in his faith. Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" Luke 22:31–32. Peter was fulfilling the command to "strengthen" his brothers that Jesus had charged him with years before.

*No matter how close to the Lord we have been as Christians, or how long-standing our Christian commitment, or how central our position in the [church], that danger of wobbling still remains and we should check ourselves often for the telltale signs. The only way to be sure of not wobbling is to remember.<sup>1</sup>*

## **2. THE BREVITY OF LIFE SHOULD ENCOURAGE US TO BE VIGOROUS IN OUR PURSUIT OF CHRIST (v. 13-14)**

*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.*

The word "think" here has the idea of careful thought and consideration. It's a math term that means to consider and then come to a thoughtful conclusion. Peter is saying, "Considering the fact that eternity truth is at stake, I have come to the conclusion that as long as I am living, it is right (proper, fitting, good) for me to "stir you up" by continual reminder.

The word "stir up" has the idea of awakening, rousing, agitating, and exciting. It was also used figuratively to describe a calm sea that had become turbulent because of a storm – an instance Peter would have remembered very well. We see it in the familiar story of Jesus calming the storm in Luke 8:22-24. Luke writes, "One day He got into a boat with his disciples, and He said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, and as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and *woke* him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He *awoke* and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm."

Oh how prone we are to settle in in the Christian life. We are prone to becoming comfortable and complacent in the Christian life. We are prone to taking what we know for granted and becoming

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<sup>1</sup> Dick Lucas and Christopher Green *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 68.

lax and lethargic – spiritually sleepy. Jesus told His disciples concerning the day and time of His future return, “Stay awake for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake” Mark 13:35–37. Paul writing to the Romans said, “The hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed” Romans 13:11. Likewise, to the Thessalonians he said, “Let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober” 1 Thessalonians 5:6.

We need to be awakened, roused and agitated by way of reminder of the truths of the gospel. We need to have the waters of indifference and forgetfulness “stirred up”. Spurgeon once said, “A good fire sometimes becomes a better one by a little stirring up.” How true is that! Last week I said that in order for a garden to be fruitful it must be intentionally and diligently cultivated. The same is true of a fire; if left unattended, unstoked, its flames will wane. But if you stir it up, it will burn bright and strong. It’s clear from the context that Peter has the Word of God in view as the primary instrument that the Holy Spirit uses to stir us up, but God also uses His people as a means of keeping us roused and sharp. The writer of Hebrews encourages us, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” Hebrews 10:24–25. God has given us all the means of grace we need for life and godliness.

Peter knew that the curtain was closing on his earthly life. Some 40 years earlier Jesus told Peter, “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” John 21:18–19. The reality of the brevity of life motivated Peter to be all the more diligent with what time he had remaining. The brevity of life should motivate us to live for what really matters. Spurgeon once said:

*Hear thou behind thee, O Christian, the chariot wheels of thy Lord; hear thou behind thee the whizzing of the arrow of death, let this quicken [your] pace! Work while it is called today, for the sun even now touches the horizon, and the night cometh when no man can work. If we knew how short a time we have to live, how much more earnest, how much more diligent should we be! Let us be up and doing. “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober,” working diligently until the Lord comes, or calls us home to himself.*

What is death? Peter refers to it as the putting off of his body (tent). It has the idea of disrobing or laying aside of this temporal, earthly garment. Paul used similar language in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4:

*For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on*

*our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*

In verse 15 Peter refers to his death as his departure. This word “departure” is the Greek word “exodus”. Death for the Christian is just a passing from the bondage and captivity of Egypt into Canaan – the Promise Land. There is no fear in death for the Christian. It is just the folding up of our tent and entrance “eisodus” into another land – the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (v. 11). It is with that great hope that we, Christians, face death. But it is also that hope that should quicken us to diligence today. Life is like a “mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” James 4:14.

### **3. YOU HAVE A PRECIOUS TREASURE – DON’T NEGLECT IT! (v. 15)**

*And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

Peter, Just like Paul, didn't care that any one remembered him. Paul said, “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” Acts 20:24. These men wanted the truth of the gospel to remain deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of those they taught. For that reason Peter labored diligently or with every “effort” to leave behind what would be of lasting and eternal value. He wanted to encourage the church in the things that will never fade away. In 1 Peter 1:22–25 he reminds us:

*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

- The gospel reminds us of the glory of God.
- The gospel reminds us of the tragedy of our sin.
- The gospel reminds us of our hopelessness apart from God’s grace and forgiveness.
- The gospel reminds us of our need for redemption in Christ.
- The gospel reminds us that we must be growing.
- The gospel reminds us that heaven awaits him who perseveres to the end.

Are you trusting Christ alone? There is no greater news than that we have a sufficient savior for our sin problem. And even as believers we should never grow weary of being reminded of this truth!