

“Remembering”

2 Peter 1:12-21

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2 Peter 1:12-21 *For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. 16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*



**“Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations.”**
Deuteronomy 32:7

We have all read the stories about the guy who crawled out of poverty and social adversity to find riches and fame. Yet often we read on later to hear accounts of that same guy abusing others who don't have and wasting money on extravagant living and gratuitous toys. Then we one day hear that the floor dropped out from under them and they lost all their money and their family, or ended up in jail or in treatment for addictions. They **had** it all, then they **lost** it all.

It's easy to stand back and be critical of such folks. After all, they had it all and essentially threw it all away. We tend to take the high road and believe we would never do such a thing. Yet for those of us that are believers and live in faith, we know that the same story is played out spiritually around us every day. Ironically, it is often those who came the farthest...those who had been redeemed out of extreme crisis and the deepest depth of sin, that eventually “kick their church to the curb,” reject those who were instrumental to their salvation and growth, and in many cases find they have become the dog who returned to its vomit or the washed pig who returns to the mud. (2 Peter 2:22) Somewhere and somehow they forgot. They forgot and lost it all.

All such stories are indictments on our tendency to forget. Isn't it amazing that we need to be repeatedly reminded of the sacrificial death of our Savior and what that has meant to us? What a commentary on the heart and tendencies of all of us! Satan understands this perfectly and regularly incorporates such a grasp of the heart of man into his attack plan. After all, he is the master of the “long con” and as long as he eventually triumphs, he is just fine with letting us run for a time in Christian circles. It seems we are much like big game fish...Satan lets us run out for a time and gain momentum until he suddenly and violently pulls back to embed his hook and then reels us in!

The rest of us stand off to the side of such disastrous accident scenes with expressions of shock and awe. For it seems inconceivable, doesn't it, that people who have been rescued from the wrath of God and granted eternal salvation would ever forget the One who, at such great cost, brought it about. It seems impossible that the relationships that they had experienced and the magnitude of benefit that others and their church who spoke into their lives, could be so seemingly easily sacrificed on the altar of self and wants.

Yet, that is sadly our tendency, and the legacy of testimony for many of us. The fact is, left to ourselves...*we forget*. All that it takes is a moment of inattentiveness. A period of selfishness. A day of self-entitlement. And suddenly everything is gone. Years of relationship and memories trashed. For that which was the sweetest of possessions becomes bitter in our mouths. With a Hollywood slow motion moment, the match is struck and dropped, and the village that is our lives is burned to the ground. Countless individuals have emphatically spoken those words to me: "Not me. I will never do that." But like Peter they were still left weeping in regret or like Judas attempting to justify their actions. For they too had it all, and threw it all away. They forgot.

The fact is, it is incredibly easy to forget the power of sin and what it cost our Savior to redeem us from it. How can we...with clarity of spiritual understanding, ever complain and grumble? We forget the greatness of redemptive living in Jesus Christ.

One of the first signs of such a "slide" is our unwillingness to forgive others. We forget that God in Christ has forgiven us, so we in our flesh fail to forgive others. We get depressed and angry, lose hope, become joyless and settle into a life of mediocrity. Another early sign is unthankfulness. We come to feel we deserve more than we have, or at least more than that "other guy" who isn't nearly as committed to Christ as we are. God kind of "owes us" really. Where is *mine*?

Once again...as he has throughout the first of his letters, Peter seems somewhat obsessed with this idea of standing strong...surviving spiritually... "finishing well." He acknowledges that they, *the readers*, know these things he *has* and *will be* speaking about. Yet there is at the same time an overt concern for the believers final state...whether they will indeed "finish well." Whether they will finish *at all*.

Peter believed that his readers substantially *knew* the truth, but it mattered little unless they were *unmovable* in that truth! The fact is today that many of us have a "price"...a "breaking point." An '*offer we can't refuse*' for which we would walk away from all of this Jesus stuff...at least practically and/or dynamically speaking. We know this is a fact! For we have all seen it happen numerous times, and often with those we would have bet money on to have "finished well!" Peter know this too and lays it out there for all of us to see.

Knowing our tendency to drift, Peter is trying to anchor the believer so he or she will weather the storms...endure the persecutions...resist the temptations of the flesh and the world. He is trying to get the believer successfully to the "finish line." I know and understand this angst very well. For both Peter and myself have and will continue to "*remind them of these things*" as long as we are "*in this tent*." In Peter's case, that would not be long. As we have already mentioned, this letter is Peter's last. Sometime soon after he penned what we are reading, Peter was executed for being a believer and moreover a *preacher* of Jesus Christ. And there is never any guarantee for myself also that I will ever see the pulpit again in this life. So there is never an instance where I come to this place that I fail to seriously consider what I want...what I *need* to say to all of you in case this is my last shot.

Peter would spend his last days writing to the churches in Asia...*writing to you and I*. I wonder if *our* passion for Christ and those here in the body would illicit similar activity on the part of others? Would we seek to finish our mission or would we be diligently working on our "bucket list?"

I wonder all of this because reading these letters leads me to believe that Peter seemed to know he wasn't going to be around much longer and he doesn't write wondering why he wasn't getting any visitors! He was more concerned about how he could still bless others, ...what he could say to encourage them and how he could pray for them. Few of us grow old or finish with that kind of heart! We frankly become that proverbial "old wineskin" that will no longer endure new wine without "exploding" when that wine begins to ferment, to "settle into" its surroundings! At a point in our lives where we should truly be the greatest and brightest witness for Christ, we find a comfortable chair and go to sleep. That is a sad thing to witness by the way...when someone who should be a spiritual patriarch in the body of Christ is in fact ending in spiritual diapers. It happens because we have forgotten.

Perhaps one of the greatest impacts in all of this lies in verse 16, where he says "...*we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*" For there is a great difference between *hearing* about a story and *living out* a story! Peter was a **participant**. He had not spent his spiritual life in the bleachers watching the game. He was a *player*. He was there when Christ was "transfigured" up on that mountain. He had touched the nail-scars in his hands. He was there beside Jesus when the blind was restored of sight, the lame walked again, 5000 fed from a few loaves and fishes. He wasn't just hearing about the event, reading about it in the newspaper, or even watching it on the evening news. No, He **participated**. He knew even what it was to have the dead come back alive at his touch! Peter had witnessed the crucifixion ... saw his dead body, and yet walked beside Him again. Peter was no novice. He was **there**.

Herein lies the great burning difference between many 'church-going' folks! This is the difference between the *believers* and the "*knowers.*" The "barely surviving" and the "earnestly thriving." It is the fact that many have *heard* of his majesty, but how many have actually *experienced* it? Many folks *believe* what they hear in church, but a few have gone on to grab a hold of that evidence and have engaged the mission personally and physically. Few have come to know experientially the truth of Jesus for themselves! This will always and forever be the vast divide within the greater body of Christ, and frankly why some will finish with a bang, and others in their end will fade into a whimper. There will always be those who know *of* Jesus, and those who actually *know* Jesus!

Jesus in John 6, after teaching some hard stuff, asked the twelve, "*Do you want to go away as well?*" Peter answered him, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed...and have come to know, ...that you are the Holy One of God.*" Peter *believed* first...but moreover he *came to know* that Jesus was the Messiah. Such was not accomplished through coming to church on Sunday mornings. It happened by actually engaging the gospel...by participating in the mission **with** Christ! It's harder to forget something when it happens to you personally.

Peter was up there that day on that mountain...when Jesus was transformed in front of him and he heard those glorious words spoken by God Himself! It wasn't a dream and it was more than a news report. All that were there with Him in those days were so certain of what they witnessed that every one of them except perhaps John, died martyr's deaths. All gave their lives without recanting...without backing down. All of them horribly executed, and nobody broke rank. Nobody ran. Nobody quit. Nobody forgot. Why? *Because they were there and therefore could not deny the truth. Are you?*

Are you truly today in such a position to actually *experience* the presence of God? To know him in such a way to secure a faith that transcends belief and becomes a knowing surety? For Peter, it was a reality beyond "belief." And the only difference between him and the mass of millions that have followed, was *he actually walked with Jesus...he was there with Him*. Others will never witness the hand of God or testify of his outpouring power or tell of His personal attributes and character, because they may know *of* Him but are not **with** Him today! Because while God is indeed on your couch in your living room, His real presence and power is only manifested in His

interaction with His children and the world they live in...the overflowing of His essence and the manifest of His divine plan. In other words, Jesus has always been where it was happening. And frankly, there are many of us that quite simply are not in that place because we just don't *want* to be.

Peter is simply saying that if we do indeed *believe*, then let us *live* that belief. Because while knowing of Jesus is a great truth, Jesus is to be *lived* not just *acknowledged*. And not just “*someday*” but “*today*” and further “*every day*.” Peter says in verse 20, “*knowing this...*” And that word is once again the “*gnosko knowing*”...the knowledge that comes only through experience. So unless I do indeed “*experience*” Christ first hand in my life...in *HIS* plan and work here on this planet, then I will never “*know*” what this passage says I must know.

So many of us stumble and trip, rise and fall, throughout the whole of our relationship with God. All because we fail to heed to sign posts of direction as we travel. Many of us are satisfied with the hope of ultimately getting to heaven someday and someday. We believe we will be happy to just squeeze into the gates of eternity, satisfied to stand in the back, saying “well, at least I made it.” Yes, that's true. But in that response we have failed to truly love the one who loved us without question. The reality is that many of us look at Christianity as merely a good defensive move so that we do not have to see hell. It has nothing to do with love, passion, thanks, commitment, and relationship.

So in living our faith with such a mindset, we never know His peace nor His abundance. We live up, down, and all around. Bouncing about with every wind, trial, and worldly experience.

This letter before us was Peter's last comments. This was what was heavy on his heart as he was “walking out the door.” He wanted us to know that it is all there before us. That the redeemed needn't spend their days on some sort of religious quest to find the deeper truths and hidden meanings. Like a farmer, the fields truly exist before us, they are “white with harvest” and we need only now to get up and *farm*.

So often we find that an eternal quest is easier than actually “farming.” I'll keep looking for that winning spiritual lottery ticket instead of getting up each day and going to spiritual “work.” Such a person appears holy and committed, when in truth he is fearful and lazy.

Peter is attempting to wrap up his life's teachings, and put it in a nutshell. He was going to lay it all out there just one more time with hope and prayer that perhaps *this* time some of the holdouts would receive it. For those who had already, he would ingrain it all into their minds and hearts a little deeper.

It has been said that you only know what you put into practice. We may fill our minds with scripture and doctrine, but it is not a real knowledge and reality unless it is activated in our day-to-day lives. Not just for a day or a week, but *permanently*. Psalms 103:7 tells us that God “...*made known His ways to Moses, (but only) His acts to the children of Israel.*”

Peter was willing to stake his life and legacy on this Jesus and what He said and lived. And we that have also done so, zealously desire today to add our testimony to the heap of history. For we “have not followed cunningly devised fables” but have truly been “eyewitnesses of His majesty.” We were there. We *are* there...

Psalm 143:5-6 *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. I spread out my hands to You; My soul longs for You like a thirsty land.*