

Week 4 - Peter's Reason for Writing - 2Peter 1:12-15

Scripture Reading: Luke 22:31-34

Introduction

Have you ever spent time making a detailed list of things you need to purchase only to realize that you left your list at home when you reached the store?

That happened to me recently as Kathy and I were working on our basement remodeling project

It was both aggravating and embarrassing as I could remember some of what I needed but not all of what I needed, and when I arrived home with less than I needed, I found myself driving back to the store

I wish I could say that was the only time that has ever happened, but, unfortunately, I'm more like comedian Steven Wright who once quipped,

"Right now, I'm having amnesia and déjà vu at the same time. I think I've forgotten this before."

Since I'm prone to forgetting things, I have become attached to the reminder app on my phone

I can quickly type in the thing I need to remember and the date and time when I need to remember it, and it alerts me so that I don't forget

And it works when I remember to put things I need to remember into it

Forgetfulness is simply a part of human nature

That may be why God established so many reminders in Scripture

Peter certainly knew what it was like to forget - we see that in our Scripture reading for this morning

He was bold in his pronouncement that he was willing to go to prison and even die with his Lord, but before the night was out, he had forgotten his bravado and denied Jesus not once but three times

We see the result of him belatedly remembering what Jesus had predicted in **Luke 22:61-62** as the text says Peter "*went out and wept bitterly*"

I expect that the remembrance of his forgetfulness may have been part of the impetus for writing this portion of 2Peter

After all, Pastor John MacArthur is quoted as saying:

"Any good teacher realizes the value of repetition. Research has shown that within an hour after hearing a spoken message, people forget up to ninety percent of it."

Verses 12-15 serve as the end of the beginning of the letter and also introduce the body of the letter

Once again, we see that these verses tie in directly with what came before as Peter starts this part of his letter with the word "therefore" which is another way of saying "because of this"

If you are taking notes, our Roman numeral one is Peter's **reason** for writing

Roman numeral two is Peter's **motivation** for writing

And Roman numeral three is Peter's **intention** in writing

Let's begin by reading through the entire passage [**2Peter 1:12-15**]

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.

I. Peter's reason for writing

Peter's reason for writing is in the first part of verse 12 [**2Peter 1:12a**] - where he literally writes

Therefore, I will not be careless always to remind you concerning these things

We can be just as we see described in **Ecclesiastes 1:9-11**

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.

There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.

When inundated by the cares, the business, the amusements, and the temptations of the world, we can soon find even things we have known very well and were sure we would always have in mind have slipped away from our memory

Scientists have discovered that the breakdown isn't at the learning stage because we can learn new information fairly easily, the problem is at the retrieval stage - our brains lose the path to the information

And repetition, being reminded of a thing, refreshes existing connections and establishes new ones meaning that the information remains accessible

Being reminded creates a kind of "muscle memory" of the mind

And Peter says the reason he wrote this letter was to issue a reminder to the recipients of it

In fact, he uses words having to do with remembering three times in these four verses - remind, reminder, and recall

A pastor isn't called to simply tell his flock new things and introduce them to new truths as exciting as learning new things is and there is great value in reminding them of what they know already but are prone to forget

I used to worry that I would run out of things to preach about and would be boring people by repeating myself but I soon came to realize that I might not have the opportunity to repeat myself nearly enough to be fully effective

In the ESV Bible the translators take Peter's meaning to be the virtues he had just listed in verses 5-7 which is proper as long as we also understand he is referring also to the results of possessing and progressing in them as behaviors

Still, I believe we should understand that really all the contents of the letter are included in Peter's meaning so it truly is more than merely "these qualities"

This section of the letter actually sets up the remainder of the letter and forms a bridge from the introduction into the main body of the letter

And Peter clarifies that he isn't teaching something new by affirming that what he is telling them is something they already know and in which they are already firmly established

Paul did much the same thing in **1Thessalonians 4:9** where he wrote to the church in Thessalonica reminding them:

Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another

Again, people need to be reminded because it's so easy to forget and forgetting can lead to not doing what one knows

Also, when he says his readers are "*established in the truth*" we should understand that he is being both congratulatory and commanding

Perhaps he knows that his readers know these things because they have received his first letter but he also knows that unless they continue to keep them in mind might soon forget them

So he is commending them for their present stance but he is also saying, in a sense, "You know what is true so continue to stand firm and don't be moved from the truth you know."

Of course, Peter has in mind the error of the heretical false teachers and won't have his readers pulled away from the truth that they have believed

In **James 5:19** we see that it's possible to wander from the truth and to engage in unrighteous behavior that goes counter to the truth but Peter is exhorting his readers to behave differently and to keep their feet planted on the bedrock of truth

As I said earlier, Peter knew the pain of forgetting something very important and here he is fulfilling the command that Jesus gave him in **Luke 22:32** - "*when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers*"

Reminding reinforces spiritual truth and we all need continual reinforcement or we will soon forget

And Peter is doubly motivated to issue this reminder at this particular time as he reveals next in the verses that follow

II. Peter's motivation for writing

Look with me again at verses 13-14 [**2Peter 1:13-14**]

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.

Peter is clearly anticipating his death and believes that it will happen at any moment

And he says the right thing for him to do is to awaken his readers and rouse their minds to remembrance of these truths

That it is "right" means that it is proper and in accordance with moral integrity but it could also mean that he views his activity in writing this reminder to be his obligation before God which would make sense in light of Luke 22:32

Peter realizes that his death is near at hand and he must do what he can for as long as he can

This letter was most likely written after Paul's death and Peter likely wanted to finish as Paul did as we see revealed in **2Timothy 4:7** where Paul, facing his own death wrote:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

The goal of every follower of Christ should be to live well and especially to finish well by running all the way through the tape at the end of their course

Peter refers to his life as being "in this body" which is an accurate translation of his meaning but, sadly, the translation of the Greek word as "body" loses some of the flavor of what Peter actually said

Peter actually used a word that means "tent" or "tabernacle" with the implication of a dwelling that is, by nature, temporary and transitory

And in doing so he is pointing to two different forms of existence - within the body during earthly life and without the body after death Just as Paul does in **2Corinthians 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.

Both Peter and Paul were aware of the relative brevity of life and were desirous to fulfill the obligation of stewardship allotted to them

All Christ-followers would do well to remember that they are dwelling in earthly tents as sojourners passing through this life with work to complete before their journey is over and operate accordingly

And since Peter says that the Lord had made clear to him that he would be putting off his earthly tent soon, Peter felt a sense of urgency to stir up his readers by way of giving them a reminder

I found it interesting in my study to discover that the root of the word “reminder” means to “retain” and I see that as significant in two senses

First, that what is constantly reminded is more likely to be retained in one’s mind and

Second, that the one who remembers what is vital is more likely to be kept stable or established as Peter put it earlier

Reminders are a part of moral instruction and

Those who are constantly stirred up to remember the truth are more likely to be supported and retained by the truth

As a bit of an aside, Peter doesn’t reveal precisely how the Lord made clear that his death would be “very soon”

However, we know that John, in the last chapter of his gospel recorded how Jesus told Peter how he would die

Look with me at **John 21:18** where we see Jesus say:

“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.”

Although we don’t know for certain just how old he was, Peter was likely in his late 60s and perhaps even 70 years of age when he penned this letter since his death came some 34 years after Jesus made that prophecy

Therefore, he would have been considered quite old at a time when the average lifespan was somewhere around 40 years

We also don’t know with any certainty how Peter died although the commonly accepted church tradition tells us that he was crucified requesting to be hung on an inverted cross because he didn’t feel worthy to be crucified as Christ was

Still, Peter had to be pleased by knowing that his death would bring God glory as Jesus foretold in **John 21:19**

So he certainly would have wanted to be diligent to finish well

So Peter conveys a sense of urgency to get his reminder down in writing even as he doesn’t seem to be overly concerned by his demise

After all, he viewed the end of his earthly life as nothing more than a striking of a tent, presumably though not stated, to move into his permanent heavenly dwelling and a “putting off” of his body like removing clothing after a day’s work

And in this description we get instruction about how we should view our life here

Of course a tent should be taken care of because that’s simply good stewardship

But literally no one would invest money in renovating their motel room and bringing personal touches to it by hanging pictures and buying new furniture for it

Have you ever wondered why they put dressers in motel rooms? I have.

And I’ve also wondered what kind of person would actually remove their clothes from their suitcase to put them in the dresser

I mean, I can continue to live out of my suitcase even after I get home until it empties out through use just to avoid transferring the clothes back to my dresser

A motel room is a temporary dwelling and we don’t get attached to it as if it were our permanent home

Likewise, we are here for a short time when compared to eternity and our true home, where we should be making investment, is in heaven

That is to say we don’t focus on what we see because those things are temporary; rather we give our focused attention to the things that are unseen and eternal [**2Corinthians 4:18**]

And Peter was doing that as he set his eyes on what was important to complete before his earthly life ended and he traded his physical body for his dwelling place in heaven

That's the view of life and death that all Christ-followers should have understanding that our time here is short and we have much to do while we are here

And that death is nothing to fear because it doesn't mean the end of us but simply a change of address to a better home with the Lord [2Corinthians 5:8]

Having seen Peter's reason and motivation for writing this second letter let's turn our attention to his intention for writing as we find it in verse 15 [2Peter 1:15]

III. Peter's intention in writing

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

Once again we see Peter refer to his death as a moving on, a departure - the actual word he used was *exodus*

And just as the children of Israel didn't cease to exist during their exodus from Egypt, neither will Peter when he moves on from this earth

It's interesting that the same word is used in Luke 9 when speaking of the Mount of Transfiguration'

Look with me at **Luke 9:31** where we read about how Moses, Elijah, and Jesus got together and talked about Jesus' coming "departure" or *exodus* that was soon to take place in Jerusalem

Peter was moving on and he wanted his readers to have his teaching available even though he would be gone

He meant for this letter to serve as his testament - not in the sense that it would stand as some kind of monument to Peter and his thoughts but in the sense that it would enable those who read it to hear his teaching and be reminded

Notice that he uses the word I mentioned earlier when talking about the breakdown in memory - "recall"

Peter knew that his readers knew the information that he was sharing but he was reminding them of it so that they would have ready access to it when facing the false teachers

And the idea of "at any time" is that they would continually and at any time be able to read this letter and be reminded of his teaching

We readily understand that what people write stand in for the person's living speech and for the living presence of the speaker and that a letter represents the writer to those who read the letter

And Peter wanted to make certain that what he had to say to his audience would be continue to be available and read at various times in the future after he was gone

He was looking to the future and engaging in legacy thinking

And that's something we all should be committed to doing

God commanded the Israelites to leave a spiritual legacy to the succeeding generations in **Deuteronomy 6:5-7**

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.

And you will likely remember that God instructed the Israelites to carry 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan and to use them to build a memorial of God's faithfulness in bringing them out of Egypt and into the Land

Author Steven Covey wrote in his best-selling book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People that one should always have the end in mind and think about how they want to be remembered

And it make a whole lot of sense

If you want to be remembered as a man or woman of God then you have to actually live as a man or woman of God

Tell your children and your grandchildren what God has done for you and what God has meant to you during your time on this earth and what you are looking forward to in heaven and how they can do the same

Instruct the younger generations in the faith so as to leave a legacy of faith

Because the only way to have relevance after you have put off your earthly dwelling is to make provision for it while you are here

And Peter's intention in writing by way of reminder was that those who read his letter would have ready access to the truths they would need

Conclusion

We are prone to forget

Forgetting, in most cases, like me not remembering to take my shopping list to the store, can cause an amount of embarrassment but not much more

But when we forget spiritual truth at a crucial moment, the results can be more serious

So we need constant and regular reminders even of the most basic of biblical truths so that they can quickly and easily be recalled when we need them most

Let's pray

In a couple of minutes the worship team is going to come and lead us in a final song and then we will observe the Lord's Table or Communion together

Communion is an ordinance of remembrance

We typically refer to Paul's instructions regarding how to practice Communion

However, let's look this morning at Luke 22 where we see Jesus implement the ordinance with his disciples on the night before he headed to the cross we see the following [Luke 22:14-19]:

*And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. **Do this in remembrance of me.**"*

One meaning of "remember" is to keep something in mind or to reflect on something and we certainly should do both of those things concerning the sacrificial suffering Christ endured on our behalf

And we see repeatedly in the Bible that a call to remember is also a call to recalibrate one's life in accordance with what is being remembered - and we should also do that

But there is another meaning to remembrance that we see in the Old Testament

Look with me quickly at **Genesis 9:16-17** where God told Noah that he was making the rainbow a covenantal sign that God would never again send a flood to destroy all flesh and God said:

"When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

When we see a rainbow we can be reminded and reassured of God's promise but notice that God says he also sees it and remembers

Now, God doesn't forget or need to be reminded in the same sense that we do

But the rainbow memorializes God's covenant before him

Applying that truth to the ordinance of Communion and Jesus' instruction to "Do this in remembrance of me" reveals a new dimension to the remembrance

And our participation memorializes Christ's sacrifice before God and reminds him of his promise to save those who trust in his Son - it reminds God of the New Covenant he has made with mankind

When we partake of the elements we raise a memorial before God and proclaim our complete trust in the sacrifice of Christ

The worship team will come now and lead us in our final song and then we will take just a few moments to prepare our hearts before we partake of the Lord's Table

Luke 22:31-34 (page 882)

“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.” Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”