

A Growth That Endures...



A VERSE BY
VERSE
EXPOSITION
OF THE
EPISTLE OF
2ND PETER

Hammering the Basics 2 Peter 1:12-15 (727)

We will begin this morning by reading the passage before us - **2 Peter 1:12-15**. I want you to notice the two words and the phrase in bold print – *remind*, *reminder*, and *to call these things to mind*. *Therefore, I shall always be ready to **remind** you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.* ¹³ *And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of **reminder**,* ¹⁴ *knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.* ¹⁵ *And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able **to call these things to mind** [lit: to cause the memory of these things].*

This idea of reminding and remembering; of memory is key to this passage. Memory is one of the extraordinary capacities of the human brain. Ours is the capacity to have an idea that was previously perceived to come into the mind again. Ours is the capacity to retain events, facts, thoughts, sights, fragrances, and so on in our minds and then to actually recall them. Ours is the capacity to be continually thoughtful or regardful of something.

But this capacity that we enjoy is not perfect. We lose the remembrance of things. In other words, we forget stuff. "I forgot his name." We neglect things. "He forgot his old friends." We fail to become mindful at the proper time. "I forgot to pay the bill." And so we need to be reminded of things. We write notes to ourselves. We maintain personal calendars. We stick Post-it notes all over the place. We remind each other.

God wants us to remember certain things. In **Exodus 20:8** God says, *remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.* **2 Timothy 2:8**, *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel.* God, aware of our tendency to forget, has actually legislated that certain things be repeated in order that they might be lodged in our consciousness; that we might be continually mindful of them. Of the Passover we read in **Exodus 13:3** and **9-10**, *And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt ... and it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead ... Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year."* The Lord's Supper is a weekly reminder for us. **1 Corinthians 11:24-25**, *"Do this in remembrance of Me."*

This desire of God applies especially to all the truth revealed to us in Scripture. **Psalm 119:160**, *the sum of Thy word is truth, and every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting.* **Psalm 119:142**, *Thy law is truth.* **Joshua 1:8**, *this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night.* It seems to me that the point Peter is making in this passage is concise and clear. **The truth (1:12) bears repetition.** The truth bears repetition.

You notice that **verse 12** begins with **Therefore**. The *therefore* in verse 10 looked back to verses 8-9. With the use of this *therefore* in verse 12 Peter is drawing a

conclusion based upon the entirety of what he has written in verses 1-11. Now, what has Peter told us so far? I want to review again the content and flow of verses 1-11. See if you can fill in any or all of the blanks.

The introduction of doctrinal error and reckless living was beginning to undermine the stability of the community of faith. II Peter was written to counter this deadly influence. Peter's strategy is to establish believers so firmly in the gospel - to familiarize them so thoroughly with the truth - that error (either in doctrine or practice) would be readily detected and resisted. Indeed, the point of this entire letter is this: **growth in the truth of the gospel fortifies the church against the destabilizing influence of error.** Peter's aim, then, is to stabilize Christians. In **2 Peter 1:3-4** Peter reviews what God has done to this end. God has supplied all we need to live the life to which He has called us in Christ.

In **verses 5-7** the focus shifts to our response to the gracious initiatives and provision of God. Here's the point of these two verses: **gratitude for grace is expressed by growth in grace.**

In **verses 8 and 9** Peter argues that **true, saving faith is confirmed by the reality (are yours) and vitality (increasing) of the graces that attend it.** Genuine faith is not an empty, hollow, void, isolated thing. Indeed, it is full of, it is accompanied by, it is adorned with those virtues that God has ordained and that the Holy Spirit produces.

Now in verse 8 the presence of these virtues renders the believer useful and fruitful in the knowledge of the gospel. In verse 9 the absence of these virtues can eventually lead to apostasy – the repudiation of one's profession of faith. So

in verses 10 and 11 “the hazard of falling is here made a motive to stir up believers to diligence and exercise of grace” (Nisbet, *1 & 2 Peter*, p. 231).

What gospel truths has Peter communicated so far? Well, in **verse 1** he tells us that Christ is God, that faith is a gift (something we *receive*), and that our faith is based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 3:9**, *and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.* In **verse 2** we learn that grace and peace is ours through the gospel alone. In **verse 3** Peter informs us that through the gospel (*true knowledge*) God has supplied everything we need to live this life to which we have been called. We learn in **verse 4** that God has given us the promises of the gospel to sustain our faith in the world.

In **verses 5-7** we learn that our effort in the Christian life is to earnestly pursue those virtues that beautify, that commend, that adorn our profession of the gospel of grace (WCF, Chapter 16, 2). In **verses 10-11** we learn that God uses the presence of these Spirit-produced virtues to assure our souls that we are in possession of grace.

Beloved, these are basic gospel truths, critical to the stability of individual believers and to the community of believers – the church. Indeed, so important are these that Peter says in **verse 12**, *Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things.* In other words, **the truth bears repetition.** In these four verses Peter opens up to us an extraordinary insight into the gospel ministry. Every believer including pastors, teachers, seminary professors, missionaries, disciple-makers, mentors, and so on ought to give this serious consideration. I

can already tell that this passage has the potential to have a profound impact upon my own ministry among you.

Peter shines the light of application upon himself and upon his ministry and responsibility as an apostle to the people of God. Peter considers this responsibility from two perspectives. The first is his responsibility to God's people while he is alive (1:12-13). The second is his responsibility to God's people after he is dead (1:14-15). That's right. You must recognize that the impact and influence of your life does not die when your body does. It lives on.

I shall always be ready. Ready in the sense of being prepared is certainly included here. Peter is saying, "I'll keep these things in mind in case anyone asks about them." But primarily he is talking about being ready in the sense of consistent practice. Let me give you an example. It is one thing for me to know about the atonement and to be able to answer your questions if and when they come up. It's another thing for me to regularly set the doctrine of the atonement before you in Word and Sacrament to the degree that you understand it, cherish it, and are conscious of it; to the degree that it is lodged in your mind and formative in your life. There is to be a focus, an emphasis, a deliberate concentration in actual practice on fundamental gospel truth. Everything else builds on the foundation; everything else hangs on the superstructure of *the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1:8).

I shall always be ready to remind you. I think the primary technique Peter uses to remind them is repetition of the truth. You see, Peter is intent on this **even though you already know them and have been established in the truth.** They had come to faith through the accurate, powerful, preaching of the gospel. From

the start they had known these basic truths. The foundation upon which these believers were being built up was solid. *How firm a foundation you saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in His excellent word.* It would be wrong for me to adopt this attitude: "Well, I preached a sermon on saving faith back in 1992. Why do I need to preach it again? I'm turning my attention to other things these days."

Here's a question. Should I stop continually bringing the basics to mind because you have already been taught them? Absolutely not! Why do we need reminding? Let me give you ten quick reasons. First, sin dulls spiritual perception and appetite. **Hebrews 3:13**, *But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* Second, we often wrongly treat familiar things (ex. the gospel) as common things. Remember the reaction of those in His hometown to Jesus? "*Is not this the carpenter's son*" (**Matt. 13:55a**)? Third, we are easily distracted by secondary issues. Fourth, false teachers can distort the truth we once embraced. Fifth, the world can capture our affections. Sixth, temporal problems can cloud the glory of God in Christ. Seventh, in our pride we tend to dismiss the priorities of the past and go for all things new and different. Eighth, our tendency is to get preoccupied with the externals of religion – programs, ministry obligations, and activities. Ninth, we avoid things that call attention to our sin (ex, the gospel). Tenth, generally believers are not active evangelists. We forget the gospel for simple lack of use. It is reduced to just another slice of knowledge that we have gained. So, brothers and sisters, we need to be reminded of basic gospel truth.

The truth bears repetition. This priority is a conviction with Peter. He has thought it through and concluded **I consider it right**. On what basis would one come to such a conclusion? Repetition of the truth is consistent with both our

condition and our spiritual needs. Repetition of the truth is consistent with the value and excellence of the gospel. Repetition of the truth is consistent with the designs of God. God has ordained the means by which men and women are brought to faith – the gospel (**Rom. 1:16**).

Indeed, so deeply held is this conviction that Peter is committed to it **as long as I am in this earthy dwelling**. As long as I am alive; as long as I can draw a breath and speak; as long as I have the oversight of this congregation, as long as I can physically minister; as long as I have anything to say about the matter, I am going to hammer the fire out of these basic, fundamental gospel truths.

It is fair to say that Peter is not particularly interested in being theologically or methodologically creative. Peter is not particularly interested in coming up with new stuff. His priority is **to stir them up by way of reminder**. Paul had the same priority. **1 Corinthians 15:1-2a**, *Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved*. Such a course requires a mastery of the basics. Vince Lombardi in reminding his players of the basics of the sport of football said, “Gentlemen, this is a football.” Winston Churchill, The great author and orator, Winston Churchill, said the key to his skills in these areas was his mastery of the basic English sentence.

This principle ought to inform my expectation as your pastor. My desire is that you be moved most often and most deeply by the gospel itself. Another ministry may have a temporary attraction - its variety of programs, its perceived energy, its newness. But here’s the question. But by what are you moved? In what are

you anchored? To what is your chief loyalty? With what are you enamored - the gospel of the grace of God in Christ or something else?

Peter's commitment was heightened by the fact that he was convinced that he didn't have long to live. In **verse 14** he says, **knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.** Most commentators refer the student of this verse back to Jesus' own words to Peter in **John 21:18-19**, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you to where you do not wish to go."* Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he [Peter] would glorify God. Each of us ought to have that same sense of urgency. I'm not talking about panic or some anxious speculation that today may be your last day. I'm talking about a keen sense of the brevity of life and of our responsibility to make the most of the time we have. In Friday morning's Star-Telegram there were 41 people listed in the obituaries. Of those 41, 11 (25%) were my age or younger. I have no promise of tomorrow. I need to hammer you with the basics while I have the opportunity. You see, **the truth bears repetition.**

Verse 15. **And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind.** Most commentators think Peter is referring to some kind of written record that he intends to leave behind. Some suggest that record is this letter of II Peter. Others, based upon **1 Peter 5:13**, suggest that Peter is referring to the Gospel of Mark. Whatever is the case, the larger point is that we need to realize that our ministries will outlive us.

The prospect of death can and ought to influence a man. In this case it prompted Peter to an even more intense diligence than he routinely manifested. I trust it will be so with me as well. I'm going to hammer this stuff so often and so clearly and so passionately that, hopefully, these truths will echo in your minds years after I am dead and I pray will echo for generations after I'm gone. That being dead I shall still speak. **The truth bears repetition.**

What is required in the ministry of a local church to make sure it remains focused on the basics of gospel truth? I want to suggest twelve commitments that we're going to have to share. First, avoid theological speculation in your ministry. If Scripture doesn't speak to it, it's probably not very important. Speculation is a waste of time and energy and often leads to error in both faith and practice. Second, anchor your ministry in the Scripture. Examine the Scriptures to see if what you are taught is the truth (**Acts 17:11**). Third, employ repetition repeatedly over and over again. Fourth, never wander far from the cross of Christ. Fifth, to aid in this be careful to structure worship around Word and Sacrament (**1 Cor. 11:24-25**). Sixth, don't try to be fancy. The gospel is simple and exquisite. Don't mess with it. Seventh, make sure everyone is clear on the main thing. Eighth, work hard to lay a sound doctrinal foundation. Ninth, make strategic plans with three or four generations in view. Tenth, stress godly living (**1:5-7, 10**). Eleventh, keep the person and work of Christ central (**1:1-2, 8, 11**). Keep reminding yourself it's not about us. Twelfth, be careful to cultivate a sense of connection to and appreciation for the historic faith (creeds, confessions, hymns, and so on).

Martin Luther said of these verses, "To remind is to preach to those who know and have heard the doctrine already, so that they are seized by it and awakened,

in order that they should not be heedless, but go forward and grow”
(*Commentary on Peter and Jude*, p. 243). Beloved, **the truth bears repetition.**

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II Peter 1:12-15 *Therefore, I shall always be ready to **remind** you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. ¹³ And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of **reminder**, ¹⁴ knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to **call these things to mind** [lit: to cause the memory of these things].*

God wants us to remember certain things.
(Ex. 20:8; 2 Tim. 2:8; Ex. 13; 1 Cor. 11:24-25)

Big Idea: The truth bears _____.

Review of the content and flow of verses 1-11

1:3-4 ... growth in the truth of the gospel _____ the church against the destabilizing influence of error.

1:5-7 ... _____ for grace is expressed by _____ in grace.

1:8-9 ... true, saving faith is confirmed by the _____ (are yours) and _____ (increasing) of the graces that attend it.

1:10-11 ... "the hazard of falling is here made a motive to stir up believers to _____ and exercise of grace" (Nisbet, *1 & 2 Peter*, p. 231).

What gospel truths has Peter communicated so far?

Verse 12 ... Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.

Why do we need reminding?

- First, sin _____ spiritual perception and appetite.
- Second, we often wrongly treat familiar things as _____ things.
- Third, we are easily **distracted** by secondary issues.
- Fourth, false teachers can _____ the truth we once embraced.
- Fifth, the world can capture our _____.
- Sixth, temporal problems can **cloud** the glory of God in Christ.
- Seventh, we tend to dismiss the priorities of the **past**.
- Eighth, our tendency is to get preoccupied with the _____ of religion.
- Ninth, we avoid things that call attention to our _____ (ex: the gospel).
- Tenth, generally believers are not active _____.

Verse 13 ... And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder.

Verse 14 ... knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

Verse 15 ... And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind
[lit: to cause the memory of these things].

What is required in the ministry of a local church to make sure it remains focused on the basics of gospel truth?

- First, avoid theological _____ in your ministry.
- Second, anchor your ministry in the _____ (**Acts 17:11**).
- Third, employ _____ repeatedly over and over again.
- Fourth, never wander far from the **cross** of Christ.
- Fifth, be careful to structure worship around _____ and _____.
- Sixth, don't try to be **fancy**.
- Seventh, make sure everyone is clear on the _____.
- Eighth, work hard to lay a sound **doctrinal** foundation.
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- Eleventh, keep the _____ and _____ of Christ central (**1:1-2, 8, 11**).
- Twelfth, be careful to cultivate a sense of connection to and appreciation for the _____ faith (creeds, confessions, hymns, and so on).