

STIRRED UP BY REMEMBRANCE

2 Peter 1:12-15

INTRODUCTION

- In 1983, Russian novelist and essayist Aleksander Solzhenitsyn said: *“I heard a number of older people offer this explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: **'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened'**.... If I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: **'Men have forgotten God.'**”*
- In forgetting their Creator, the ungodly people of this world have transgressed his laws, blasphemed his name, and polluted the entire planet with the corruption of sin
- God promises: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17)
- Yet this affliction of forgetfulness befalls not only the unbelievers of the world, but also God’s people
- Repeatedly God warned the children of Israel to “Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 8:11)
- He gave them his laws, even repeating them in Deuteronomy (which means “second law”), he gave them annual feasts which served to remind them of his goodness towards them
- The verb “remember” is found over 130 times in the Old Testament, and means much more than to “be mindful”, but has the strength of “trust” and “hold onto”
- To remember the Lord is to think upon him, to fear him, to submit to him, trust him and serve him

- The children of Israel show the disastrous results of failing to remember the Lord after he delivered them from Egyptian bondage – on the one hand “they soon forgot his works” (Psalm 106:13-14), but on the other they clung to fond and imagined memories of the good things they enjoyed in Egypt (Numbers 11:4-6)
- God’s wrath was kindled against them and he smote them with a very great plague (Numbers 11:33)
- As humans, we have a great capacity in our minds to *remember* things, but at the same time we have a great propensity in our minds to *forget* things
- The apostle Peter, knowing he was about to die, had a great concern for the saints he was leaving behind in a hostile world, full of sin, temptation, opposition and error
- How could he help and strengthen the church to remain faithful to carry on the work of the gospel in the world, and not fall away and be overcome by the world?
- He would do so by bringing them to remembrance of the truth

I. THE SOLEMN TASK OF REMINDING

A. “Wherefore”

1. Having set forth God’s grace towards us in saving us and supplying us with all we need for life and godliness; and our duty to add to our faith those seven graces that make us fruitful, that give us assurance, and that lay up for us treasures in glory, Peter then proceeds to explain his motivation in doing so
2. So important and vital is it that we grow in knowledge and godliness, that he is compelled to remind them of these things

B. Peter's diligent concern for the welfare of the church

1. "I will not be negligent" (v.12) – as an apostle and preacher, he keenly felt his duty before God to instruct the saints in sound doctrine that they would be established in the faith
2. "I think it meet" (v.13) – I think it becomes me as an apostle; it is my appropriate duty; a duty which is felt the more as the close of life draws near
3. "I will endeavour" (v.15) – this word (*spoudazo*) is from the same word translated "diligence" in vv.5,10 – he resolved to diligently labour for the same cause until his time on earth was ended

C. The ministry of reminding

1. Knowing how prone we all are to forget spiritual truths and to be drawn away to the world, all Christians, but particularly ministers, need to bring the brethren into remembrance of the truth
2. "These things" refers to what has previously been written, the whole of the epistle, and more broadly, all of God's truth revealed in Scripture
3. The believers receiving this epistle had already been instructed in the doctrine
 - a. This shows the priority in the early church of grounding new believers in the truth by careful and continual instruction
 - b. They were not concerned with entertainment, emotional manipulation or motivational speeches, but with "preaching the word" (2 Timothy 4:2)

4. A large part of the pulpit ministry is not so much setting forth new truths, but reminding the people of old truths they already have learned
 - a. Like a nail that is driven deeper into the wood with each blow of the hammer, the truth sinks deeper into our hearts each time we hear it
 - b. We forget 90 to 95 percent of what we hear within 72 hours
 - c. “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1)
5. We should be wary of any preacher who claims to have some “new revelation” from God that was previously unknown – “If it’s true it’s not new; if it’s new it’s not true”

II. THE SANCTIFYING TENDENCY OF REMEMBERING

A. Remembering establishes us in the truth

1. God’s truth is under attack today, both in the world and in our hearts
2. “Established” (*sterizo*) is to be confirmed, fixed, set firm as a rock, and describes the believer whose mind is settled in the truth (1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 3:17)
3. Peter, whose name means “stone”, was commanded by the Lord Jesus to “strengthen (*sterizo*) thy brethren” (Luke 22:32)
4. In contrast to the established, mature Christian, others are far from established
 - a. The wicked are like the troubled sea (Isaiah 57:20)
 - b. Unbelievers are like those who build a house of a foundation of sand (Matthew 7:26-27)

- c. False teachers are likened to “raging waves” and “wandering stars” (Jude 13)
 - d. Immature Christians are likened to “children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14)
6. It is the “present truth” we must be established in
- a. This is the absolute, unchanging, eternal truth of God’s word
 - b. “Present” means it is available and in our possession

B. Remembering stirs us up in our minds (13)

1. “Stir up” (*diegeiro*) is to arouse and awaken
2. As we are prone to forget, so are we prone to becoming slack, settled, lethargic and cold in our spiritual walk
3. We all need godly men reminding us of God’s truths, to provoke us to action, to awaken us, to stir us up, to stoke and kindle the coals that have lost their heat
4. Our enemies of the world, the flesh and the devil continually pour cold water on the fire in our hearts, making us spiritually cold
5. The antidote to such coldness is to be reminded of truth from the word of God
 - a. We need to be continually under sound Bible preaching and teaching
 - b. We need to be continually engaged in personal Bible reading and study

6. The Ephesian church had left their first love – the way back was by remembering and repenting (Revelation 2:5)
7. Note that it is particularly the “mind” of the believer that is in focus here
 - a. It is where we “know” and “remember” (v.11), and what is to be stirred up (3:1)
 - b. Therefore our minds must be renewed by the Spirit of God (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23)
 - c. Contrary to the people of the world who are led by their feelings and emotions, the believer is to be led by his mind that is filled with the truth of God’s word
 - d. The mind influences the affections which in turn influences the will

III. SHORTLY THIS TABERNACLE IS RELINQUISHED

- A. Peter knew his death was imminent
 1. “Putting off the tabernacle” is a figurative description of death, likening the physical body as a tent in which our soul dwells for a time
 2. Death is not a cessation of existence or consciousness, but a departure of the soul from the body (James 2:26)
 - a. Death for the believer is to be absent from the body, present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:1-9)
 - b. Death for the believer is to “depart and to be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23)
 - c. “Sleep” is used as a euphemism for death, in that the dead body rests in the grave until the resurrection when it will “awake” to everlasting life

- d. Instances in Scripture clearly show the continued conscious existence of the soul after the body lies dead (Luke 16:22-23; 23:43; Revelation 6:9)
3. Peter had been foretold by Christ certain circumstances around his death – it would be when he was old, it would be a violent martyrdom, and it would glorify God (John 21:18-19)
4. Peter may have had another personal revelation from Christ at the time of writing the letter regarding his imminent death
5. “Shortly” (*tachinos*) – imminent, soon, swift – means that Peter’s death was not only fast approaching, but that its manner would be sudden and swift (cf. 2:1)
6. Note that Peter’s use of the terms “decease”, “tabernacle” and “stir” can be linked to the account of the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36) where they are all used, as Peter leads into his recounting of the same even in vv.16-18

B. The knowledge of death as motivation

1. Peter is not worried about his death, but rather has peace, confidence and assurance
2. Knowing he is about to die, he does not slacken off, but rather becomes more urgent in serving God with the time he has left
3. He desired to continue to stir up the saints even after his death by writing this epistle (and perhaps by assisting Mark in his record of the gospel)
 - a. It would seem that Peter understood he was writing under God’s inspiration as the following verses describe God’s word and his means of inspiring men to write it

4. Today, nearly 2000 years after his decease, Peter's divinely inspired words are still stirring us up to love and obedience to Jesus Christ and his truth

CONCLUSION

1. Are you aware of your own forgetfulness of the Lord and his truth, and the coldness of heart that accompanies such forgetfulness?
2. What are you doing to ensure you are being continually reminded and stirred up by the truth of God's word?
3. What are you doing to provoke others to remembrance and stir up their minds to spiritual things?
4. Peter was keenly aware of his mortality which motivated him to urgent service of the Lord
5. Are living each day and each moment as if it were your last upon earth, and that at any time you may be called to stand before Jesus Christ to give an account?
6. Christ said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4)
7. Pray this prayer: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)
8. What godly legacy will you be leaving behind for the next generation?