

EXPOSITION OF II PETER

Message #5

II Peter 1:12-15

The most devastating loss to my Christian life was the night I received a phone call from Nelson Miles and Bill Bagley saying that Mr. Miles had died. After I came to faith in Jesus Christ, he was the man God used to instruct me in the things of sound doctrine. Mary has put up pictures of him in our home and I have pictures of him in my office. He was a great man of God, the greatest I will ever have known, and I had the privilege of having him as my teacher and my friend. What I have now are memories; memories of his teaching, memories of our conversations and memories of his life. Those memories motivate me to think right and hopefully live right.

The Apostle Peter knew he was going to die. In fact, he specifically says that in this context in **verse 14**. His life had been an incredible journey. He had been a worldly Jew who had pursued fulfilling his sensual cravings in a lustful world. But now, 35 years later, he was a godly apostle who pursued the will of God. Peter was concerned by what he saw; he had a pastor's heart.

As he was nearing the end of his life, he saw that the world was becoming more and more evil. It seems to me from reading II Peter that three godless evils really caught his attention because they were escalating: **1) Sensual, immoral, godless behavior; 2) False religious teachers; 3) Greed.** If we remember that Peter saw these things as he neared his own death and as he waited for the return of Jesus Christ, and if we remember that some of what Peter writes is prophecy (II Peter 1:19-21), we may assume that as we get closer to the Rapture of the Church, these three godless traits will continue to escalate. These three godless qualities can be a real threat to the believer. They can prevent him from having an abundant entrance into heaven.

Peter's goal is that every believer finishes his Christian life with an abundant entrance into heaven and this Epistle is his manual as to how to make this happen. As we come to these verses, there is a very important key that he unlocks and it is this:

A KEY TO LIVING A GODLY LIFE IN A GODLESS, SENSUAL, GREEDY, LUSTFUL WORLD IS WHAT WE THINK ABOUT WITH OUR MINDS AND OUR MEMORIES.

When most of us are getting ready to go on vacation or away for some period of time, we typically make out a list of things we want someone looking after our home to remember. We will usually say "don't forget this" or "now remember if ...". Peter was getting ready to go away for good and what he says here is "don't forget the Word of God."

One of the big problems with the memories of believers is that they tend to use their minds to remember things they should forget and they forget things they should remember.

We need to use our minds to focus on the Word of God and on apostolic teaching. This is a critical key to a godly life in a godless world. Our minds need to be riveted on the inspired Scriptures. These verses are transitional verses in that they connect us to what he has previously said to what he will say in the remainder of the book.

What these verses actually do is to cause the believer to use his or her mind to focus three right ways (all doctrine found in the written Word of God):

(Focus #1) - Think seriously about the importance of the preceding verses.

So far there are three main themes that he has developed:

Theme #1 - Remember your position ;

Theme #2 - Remember your power ;

Theme #3 - Work on your own character .

(Focus #2) - Think seriously about the fact that this is an apostle's final letter before he dies.

(Focus #3) - Think seriously about what he will develop in the remainder of the Epistle.

I get a kick out of some of the secular educators who postulate the idea, in promoting their schools, that “the mind is a terrible thing to waste.” Actually I agree with this in a certain context. However, what they don't tell you is that they are the ones wasting the minds. Most universities actually train students to waste their minds, because they leave out the most valuable focus of any mind and that is God and His Word. This is why many who are viewed as “highly educated” by the world's perspective are moral wrecks, living godless, immoral lives. Their minds are completely deranged. They are not focused right.

Peter most definitely emphasizes the mind in these verses. In **verse 12** he says he is “reminding” them of something they need to think about. In **verse 13** he says “I consider” and he wants to stir them by way of “reminder.” In **verse 15** he says he wants them to “call these things to mind.” **Clearly what we think about with our minds will affect how we live in life.**

Our minds can drift off into some strange ways of thinking. I had a dream this week that I was going to make a hospital call at Bronson Hospital. I was in my truck and I was going to park in the Jasper Street parking lot. I pulled into the lot and realized that to get into the parking spot would be tricky, so I decided to back in. I pulled up past the parking spot, looked in my mirror and saw that I needed to pull up further; so I put my truck in drive and went to step on the gas and the gas pedal was gone. I said to Mary, “What have you done with the gas pedal of my truck?” When I can't find something, I'll typically assume she has messed with it. She said, “I haven't touched it or seen it.” Well I said, “It is gone and I am stuck in this parking lot.” About that time I woke up at about 4:30, had my devotions, jumped in the shower, and shortly after 5:30 decided to head to the office. The first thing I did when I got into the truck was make sure that gas pedal was there. The mind, especially my mind, can get goofy. This is why it is so critical that we keep our focus on God's Word. God's Word will transform our minds into thinking right in a world that isn't right.

There is tremendous power in our memories and the key to victory in a lustful and sensual world is to reprogram our minds and our memories with godly things from the Word of God and not godless, sensual things.

There are four specific thoughts that Peter develops in these verses:

THOUGHT #1 – We need to be continually reminded of things we already know. **1:12a**

William Barclay said real preaching very often needs to remind a man and bring back to his memory truth that he has either forgotten or not fully grasped or appreciated (*II Peter*, p. 308). It is interesting that he doesn't start out by scolding, but by encouraging the people to remember critical things they already know.

Peter wants us to always keep our focus on the truth of God. Now the “these things” refers back to the first eleven verses. Peter wants believers to remember that they have been called by God, they need to keep their focus on growing deep in their knowledge of the Word of God, God has given them all the power they need to succeed, and they need to continually work on their own lives realizing they can have an abundant entrance into heaven.

These believers did not need to be taught again; they needed to remember the teaching they already had. This is a critical key to finishing an award-winning believer. The backdrop of this is that many false teachers were surfacing presenting their new novel ideas about morality and life. The temptation was for believers to begin to drift away from the focus they had on apostolic teaching to the way of the godless. Peter Davids said “memory fades fast when the pressure is on or when new and attractive teaching comes along” (*The Letters of II Peter & Jude*, p. 193).

I would like to use a very practical illustration here to make the point. I believe that many churches today are doing that which is sensual and demonic. I do not believe that rock bands or light shows are conducive to true reverent worship. Now there is a major movement in most churches to get away from expounding the Scriptures to more of a loosey-goosey, anything goes entertainment philosophy in church services. Just recently someone told me they had come from a church where people were bringing their pop and coffee into the sanctuary as the band was playing and there was absolutely no reverence for God. In this context, Peter would say you stick to the reverent worship you already know to be right. Do not give in to this new wave of sensual conduct being propagated by unprincipled men and women.

THOUGHT #2 – We need to remember things we know have established us in the truth.
1:12b

The implication of this is that there was a certain doctrinal instruction that had taken place. There was a body of theology that these apostles taught, and these believers needed to remember these things and stick to sound doctrine.

You cannot possibly be established in your faith without being established in the Word of God and the doctrines of God. J. Gresham Machen once said, “Indifference to doctrine makes no heroes of the faith.”

Now notice that Peter says remember things that have established us “in the truth” (εν τη αληθεια). The noun truth is articular, which means Peter has in mind the truth of God from the Scriptures. We are not established by remembering the opinions or speculation or the legalism of men. We are established by remembering the truth of God found in the Word of God.

This was a critical key to the mind of Peter in living a godly life in a godless world. We do not want to fall into the trap of following the opinions and philosophies of religious men; we want to remember the inspired Word of God.

THOUGHT #3 – We need to remember the apostles thought it was right to remind us of truth until the day they died. **1:13-14**

Peter is an apostle and one of the prerequisites of being an apostle is you received direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Over thirty years prior to II Peter, Jesus had revealed to Peter that he would die and also how he would die (John 21:18-19a). It is clear that Peter knew this and apparently he had received additional revelation from Jesus Christ about his pending death. It is more than just a coincidence that as he was nearing his own death, he uses a majestic title concerning Jesus, “Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is God (Lord), He is Savior (Jesus) and He is Messiah (Christ). As he neared his death, he focused on one person, Jesus Christ.

Peter says, I will keep reminding you of this until the day I die. It is right that I refresh your memories. In other words, Peter would keep teaching and communicating the Word of God until he left this world. **When we die the ability to do anything more for God stops.** When we die we have no more time to do anything or say anything. Peter uses his last hours of life to try to get believers to keep their focus on the Word of God, and he does so by writing an inspired letter.

Peter uses an interesting word for his body; he calls it an “earthly dwelling” (σκηνομα) which is the Greek word for a temporal tabernacle or tent. The Apostle Paul used exactly the same word when he applied it to the death of himself and every believer (II Corinthians 5:1-5).

The emphasis of Peter’s tent idea is that the body we are now in on this earth is not a permanent place of residency but a temporal place that will be relocated. Now Peter said his death was “imminent” which meant it was very soon to happen. However, as long as Peter was in this temporal body, he was going to remind these believers of the importance of God’s Word.

S. Lewis Johnson once said that he had read a book on how to die with style and one of the ways to do it was to die with a sense of humor. He cited a story about Dr. Samuel Upham who had been a theologian who wanted to die with a little bit of humor. Some of his close friends and relatives had gathered around his dying bed and Dr. Upham was lying quietly with his eyes closed and they were wondering whether or not he had died, because it appeared that he had died. One of those standing by the bed said, “Feel his feet because no one has ever died with warm feet.” At that moment, Dr. Upham opened one eye and said, “Jon Huss” did. With that he closed his eyes and died with a little bit of humor.

As Peter was nearing his death, he looked into a godless and immoral world being led by godless and immoral religious leaders and he did not see anything funny about it. So what he did is say, “I am reminding you until the day I die to use your minds to think about godly things.” Use your minds to focus on God’s Word.

Now the dying utterances of godly men are extremely important. This challenge to remember the Word of God and live godly in a godless world is the dying utterance of the Apostle Peter.

Wise people think about the temporality of their own lives. Wise people realize night is coming. The closer we get to our own death, the more wise people will analyze what we are using our minds to think about. As our years creep up the ladder from the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, and 90's, those who think soundly want minds given to understanding and applying God's Word.

THOUGHT #4 – We need to realize the diligence of the apostles in having us call these things to our minds. **1:15**

Many think this verse is the real heart and purpose of the letter. This letter serves as a permanent reminder that we need to continue to use our minds to think on God's Word. Sometimes family members get into a squabble over who gets what when the person dies. If the person doesn't have a sound mind, it is often difficult to figure this out. Peter had a sound mind and he knew exactly what he wanted to leave believers.

Peter was facing his own death, and he wanted these believers to go on and develop in truth and deep knowledge of God's Word. Now the Apostle Peter is writing with an "after my departure" viewpoint. In other words, he wanted this final letter to affect their minds after he was gone. This was his last will and testament. The existence of II Peter reinforces this point that they needed to stay focused on the written Word of God in a godless and sensual world.

Clearly, spirituality has to do with the way we think and with what we think about with our minds. Peter makes an assumption here in that after he is gone, the written Scriptures would still be here so we can study them and recall things to our minds.

A critical key to our minds is to read the Word of God. Our memories are often unreliable, but the Scriptures are always reliable. Our minds are often unstable, but the Scriptures are always solid.

Let me leave us all with five key memories:

Memory #1 - We need to remember faith in Jesus Christ saves us from all of our sins.

Memory #2 - We need to remember that one day we will escape the corruption of this world.

Memory #3 - We need to remember that we need to work on our own individual lives in developing a godly character, and God has given us the power and nature to do this.

Memory #4 - We need to remember that our time and life on this earth is short.

Memory #5 - We need to remember the importance of a serious focus on God's written Word so we may grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.