

EXPOSITION OF II PETER

Message #11

II Peter 3:1-2

One commentator, who analyzed this portion of II Peter, said it is clear that God's Word directs His people to get their guidance for faith and life from the Bible and not from "nonrational, out of the blue illuminations" (Robert Harvey, *II Peter*, p. 112).

When we come to this third chapter of II Peter, we come to a slight change. All through chapter two Peter has been denouncing false religious teachers and false prophets. He will once again in this chapter bring out truth about false teachers, but he will really zero in on encouraging and challenging God's people to use their minds to focus on God's written Word in view of them.

There is no question that Peter has just concluded a lengthy section in chapter two that exposes false teachers. He targets them and he verbally blasts them. He wanted God's people to be able to spot them and stay away from them. When you come to chapter three, he wants to stress the importance of staying mentally focused on the inspired Scriptures.

Notice that in **II Peter 3:1**, Peter mentions this is the second letter he is writing and in **verse 2** he refers to the words of the prophets and the apostles. So what Peter is saying here is:

THE KEY TO GOD'S PEOPLE COMBATING FALSE RELIGIOUS TEACHING AND A GODLESS LIFESTYLE IS TO USE THEIR MINDS AND HEARTS TO CAREFULLY AND ACCURATELY UNDERSTAND THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD.

I want us to observe how Peter refers to God's people; he calls them "beloved." He will use this term four times in this final chapter (3:1, 8, 14, 17). This is a very tender term, which means Peter highly esteemed and greatly loved these people. His heart was with these believers. As Robert Harvey said, "We hear the heartbeat of Peter's pastoral concern" by the use of this term (*II Peter*, p. 110).

Peter has written stinging truth and rebuke against false teachers, but at the same time he wanted God's people to know that the reason he did this is because they were people who were loved by God and by him and the other apostles. Even though this is a letter of warning, the reason he writes it is because God's people are so special.

Now there are two main observations we want to make concerning this section of Scripture:

OBSERVATION #1 – Peter wrote a second inspired letter. **3:1a**

The actual Greek word "letter" is the word from which we get our English word "epistle" (ἐπιστολή), which means "letter" (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 174).

Now some have said that they aren't sure what letter Peter is referring to by the idea of this being his second letter. Some scholars have gone to great lengths to promote the idea that the first letter is a lost letter. However, the most logical conclusion is he is referring to I Peter. **I Peter was the first letter written by Peter and II Peter was the second letter written by Peter.** This is not rocket science, just logical observation.

As Peter was soon to die (1:14), he was driving home the importance of God's people keeping their minds focused on the written, inspired Scriptures. He himself was writing one final epistle which was inspired by God.

His contextual point is, I didn't write either letter just for the fun of it or to kill some time while I wait to die. These letters have been written to give you truth of God to change the way you think and live. The written Scriptures are the most important tangible thing that we have. Accurately understanding these 66 books of the Bible is the most important thing that we will ever do in this life. I am convinced that the only way to accurately understand God's Word is to go straight through every book of the Bible. I do not believe jumping around from topic to topic will ever replace systematic Bible exposition.

Peter did not write II Peter so you could focus on one verse in chapter 3 which says, "God is not wishing for any to perish"; he wrote the entire letter and we have the responsibility to go through all of it and carefully understand it.

I read an article this week that contained an interview with Billy Graham that was conducted by Greta Van Susteren. The interview was conducted a couple of months ago. Billy Graham is 92 years old and he said, "I know that my time is limited on this earth." Greta asked Mr. Graham if he had the opportunity to live his life over, would he do anything different. I found his answer fascinating. He said, "I would study more, I would pray more, I would travel less, take less speaking engagements" (*Billy Graham reflects: "My Time is Limited"*, West Michigan Christian News, p. 1). As Billy Graham has reflected on things, he realizes the importance of studying God's Word. That is exactly what Peter is communicating here. His time was short and he wanted God's people to use their minds to study the written Word of God. This is the reason he wrote a second inspired letter.

OBSERVATION #2 – Peter's purpose for writing was to stimulate their minds to think right.
3:1b-2

Notice how Peter again really zeroes in on the believer's mind. He wanted to stir their minds concerning the importance of God's Word. He wanted to remind them and cause them to remember things.

It is clear that this letter is written to believers so they would grow in knowledge (II Peter 3:18). What this means is that we should always be studying and learning new things from God's Word. We should be studying new books of the Bible and pouring through the great doctrines of the faith. We should use our minds to go after depth levels of understanding.

However, there is a place to also remember certain key doctrines and certain key truth. One of the things that I have had the privilege of studying and teaching multiple times is “Systematic Theology.” I love doctrine. To truly know God we need to know every book of the Bible and every major doctrine developed in the Bible. I believe those key doctrines need to be studied over and over again. You may think because you studied it once, you don’t need to do it again. I used to get a big kick out of hearing people lay claim to the fact that they went through some discipleship training manual years ago that really developed their spirituality.

I am thankful whenever anyone learns any real truth, but there is no discipleship training manual in existence that will replace knowing these books of the Bible and going over these great doctrines of the faith. See what Peter says here; there are things we need to remember, which means we need to go over them more than once.

Now Peter uses a series of interesting words to communicate three syntactical powerful points:

(Syntactical Point #1) - The verb “stir up” (διεγείρω) is one that means to arouse or wake up completely (*Ibid.*, p. 114).

The point of this word is that Peter wants believers fully alert and completely awake in their minds to the truth of God. He does not want God’s people sleeping when it comes to their minds knowing and understanding God’s truth. He wants our minds sharp and completely awake to God’s Word. This stresses the importance of having an active mind to the truth of God’s Word in a world of false teachers.

(Syntactical Point #2) - The noun “mind” (διανοῦα) refers to a mind that thinks and understands (*Ibid.*, p. 110).

The noun “mind” is articular and is qualified by an adjective “sincere” (εὐλικρινῆ). This adjective refers to a mind that is focused on pure, unalloyed truth, free from any mixed substances (*Ibid.*, pp. 131-132). Richard Lenski said this word specifically refers to the “thinking mind” (*II Peter*, p. 336).

The inspired Scriptures have been written to affect your specific, individual mind, if you have a thinking mind that is pure and after truth. God wants His people knowing His pure truth and thinking about His truth. False teachers do not have pure thinking minds; they have polluted minds that are not after pure truth.

Peter is writing to remind these believers of the importance of using their thinking mind to remember the inspired Scriptures.

When you look at what has happened in most churches, this Petrine reminder has all but been forgotten.

Take a look around you and see the people who go to church who do not care if they carefully or accurately study and hear the Scriptures expounded. We have had people come to this church who have told us that they have never heard some of the things they are now hearing from books

of the Bible. The books of the Bible have been around for thousands of years. So what has gone wrong? Peter's point here had been neglected. Most are not going to church with the idea that I am going to hear and learn God's Word and my mind is going to focus on His truth.

(Syntactical Point #3) - The thing Peter wants minds focused on are the “ words ” of Scripture.

The noun “words” (ρηματων) refers to the specific words that are written or spoken (*Ibid.*, p. 397). There is an article “the” before the noun “words” meaning this is referring to specific words of Scripture, not just any word spoken by anyone. Do not miss this key point. Proper doctrine, proper belief, proper lifestyle will come from a focus on the “words” written in Scripture. **If we don't go to work on accurately understanding and interpreting the actual words God wrote, we are not pursuing the course God wants us to pursue.** Our faith comes down to words rightly understood. Words form sentences. Sentences form paragraphs, and the words that grammatically develop all of this are inspired by God.

Let me illustrate the point of how little we know of the actual words of Scripture. I would be willing to bet that probably most people here in this sanctuary know the verse John 3:16. Probably most here can quote by memory John 3:16. But do we really know what the words mean?

- 1) Do we know what the conjunction “for” actually connects to?
- 2) Does the first clause “God so loved the world” refer to the amount of people God loves or does it refer to the magnitude of his love for a sinful depraved world?
- 3) When the text says “God gave His Son,” does it mean that God gave His Son to become a man to live a perfect life under the law, to suffer and die as a substitute, and to be raised the third day; or is it a reference to His Son leaving heaven authorized by God?
- 4) What is the connection between God giving His Son and His love for the world?
- 5) What is meant by the fact that His Son is His “only begotten Son”?
- 6) What does it actually mean to “believe in Him” so one has saving faith?

The point of this illustration is to show the importance of words. This is precisely Peter's point here.

In fact, Peter qualifies what words believers should focus on. There are three Divine sources of inspired words that Peter mentions which really cover all of Scripture:

Divine Source #1 - The words of the Holy Prophets.

I want you to notice that Peter qualifies the prophets by identifying them as “holy prophets”; that is prophets who have truly been set apart by God. The reason why he does this is because there are always false prophets and false teachers and ministers who have not actually been called and set apart by God.

Those O.T. prophets were set apart by God to communicate His Word. When false teachers start propagating their false ideas, we need to immediately use our minds to think about whether or not it squares with the prophetic Word of God.

One of the great themes that shows up over and over again in the O.T. prophets, is that one day Jesus Christ will come to this world as Judge, and all the government of God will be on His shoulders. He will rule the world.

This text clearly challenges us to carefully remember and understand O.T. books of the Bible. The Apostle Paul said the same thing in speaking of the Old Testament. He said “these things happened as examples for us” (I Corinthians 10:6). We need to crawl through the words of the Old Testament and understand them in light of the New Testament.

Divine Source #2 - The words of Jesus Christ .

There have been differing opinions as to the commandment of the Lord. Now one of the contextual points here is the fact that Jesus Christ promised that He would come back. So if some false teacher says He won't come back, those who have pure minds that are after pure truth, immediately stick to the Word of God.

Also, the specific commandment to which Peter could be referring in this context is the commandment to believe and obey all of the commandments (Matthew 28:20), which He would give through the apostles. The apostles were to take the Word of God and communicate it and the people were responsible to hear it, believe it, and obey it.

Divine Source #3 - The words of the Apostles .

I want us to observe that the apostles were called “your” apostles. Later in this chapter, Peter will mention Paul and his letters, which are Scriptures (II Peter 3:15-16). Peter was an apostle. John was an apostle. Paul was an apostle. What Peter is saying here is that all of us are your apostles who wrote the inspired Scriptures and you need to focus your mind on understanding the words we have written.

An apostle was the highest ranked gift that God gave to His Church (I Corinthians 12:28). What Peter is saying is that God has given us as a gift to you to open up truth and we are “your apostles.” **Now of course the question we must ask is “just where do we find the words of the prophets and Jesus Christ and apostles?” The answer is, “the inspired, written Scriptures.”**

We have the responsibility to use our minds to carefully understand the Scriptures. We are to get our guidance from apostolic instruction that is consistent with the teachings of the O.T. and with Jesus Christ. We are not to focus our minds on our feelings or experiences or circumstances. No stability will come from that. We need to focus our minds on the words of the Scriptures. When you want to know God's will, crawl into God's Word. The O.T. prophets predicted that Jesus Christ would come into the world. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record the fact that Jesus Christ did literally come into this world. He physically said things and did things. The apostles predict that Jesus Christ will come back again.

This is a world filled with many heresies and many heretics. What we need to survive this world is a very careful and accurate understanding of God's Word. May God help us all to use our minds for this exalted purpose.