

2 Peter 1:12-21¹

12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been strengthened in the truth which is present with you. 13 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 indicated to me. 15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. 16 For we did not make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, following cleverly devised myths, but being eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"— 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And we have as more sure the prophetic word, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes by one's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

WAKE UP AND REMEMBER!

The best defense against false teaching is a life truly lived. A church with growing Christians, who are vibrant in their faith and committed to the Word of God, is not likely to fall prey to counterfeit Christians. Of course, such authentic Christianity must be based on the authority of God's inerrant Word. False teachers find it easier to mislead people who do not know the Bible and who are influenced by "experiences" with God. To build faith on subjective experience and ignore objective revelation is to abandon Biblical orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

In the first half of chapter 1, Peter discussed Christian experience, and in the second half he discussed the revelation found in the Word of God. His purpose was to show the importance of knowing God's Word and relying on it completely. The Christian who knows what and why he believes will rarely be seduced by false teachers and their devious doctrines.

¹ Adapted from:

Gangel, K. O. (1985). [2 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 871–879). Victor Books. AND

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 435–471). Victor Books.

Men Die, but the Word Lives (2 Peter 1:12–15) Through their preaching and teaching, the New Testament apostles laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20), and now we are building on that foundation. Of course, those apostles were not the foundation—Jesus Christ is the both the Foundation (1 Cor. 3:11) and the chief Cornerstone of His church (Eph. 2:20). A church built on mere men cannot last. It must be built on Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus told Peter when he would die and how he would die: *“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 where you do not wish to go.”* (John 21:18).

As a result, Peter was able to sleep in prison the night before he was scheduled to be killed because he knew that Herod could not take his life (Acts 12:1ff). According to tradition, Peter was crucified in Rome. Of course, like all of God’s faithful servants, Peter was immortal until his work was done.

There were at least three motives behind Peter’s ministry as he wrote this letter:

- Obedience to Christ’s command. *“I will always be ready”* (2 Peter 1:12). *“Once you have returned,”* Jesus had said to Peter, *“strengthen your brothers”* (Luke 22:32). Peter knew that he had a ministry to fulfill.
- This was the right thing to do—he wrote, *“I think it is right and suitable.”* It is always right to stir up the saints and remind them of the Word of God!
- He was *diligent* (2 Peter 1:15). This is the same word that is translated *diligence* in 2 Peter 1:5 and 10. It means *“to hasten to do something and to be zealous in doing it.”* Peter knew that he would soon die, so he wanted to discharge his spiritual responsibilities before it was too late. You and I do not know when we will die, so we should also be diligent!

What was it that Peter wanted to accomplish? The answer is found in the word, *remembrance*, which is repeated in 2 Peter 1:12–13 and 15. Peter wanted to so impress his readers with the Word of God that they would never forget it! *“I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder”* (2 Peter 1:13).

To *“stir you up”* means *“to awaken, to arouse.”* This same word is used to describe a storm on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:18)! Peter realized that when our minds get accustomed to truth, we tend to take it for granted—we *forget what we ought to remember, and we remember what we ought to forget!* The readers of Peter’s letter

Study Notes for 2 Peter

knew the truth and were even “*established*” in it (2 Peter 1:12), but this was no guarantee they would remember the truth and live by it.

One reason the Holy Spirit was given to the church was to remind believers of the lessons already learned (John 14:26). For example, Paul wrote in Philippians 3:1—“*To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.*” Jesus, the Master Teacher, often repeated Himself as He taught the people.

Since Peter knew that he was going to die, he wanted to leave behind something that would never die—the written Word of God. His two epistles became a part of the inspired Scriptures, and they have been ministering to the saints for centuries. Men die, but the Word of God lives on!

It is possible that Peter was also alluding to the Gospel of Mark, since most Bible scholars believe that the Spirit used Peter to give John Mark much of the information in his Gospel (cf. 1 Peter 5:13). Papias, one of the church fathers, said that Mark was “*Peter’s disciple and interpreter.*”

It is vital to remember that the church is only one generation away from extinction. If there were no dependable written revelation, we would have to depend on word-of-mouth tradition. If you have ever played the party game “*Gossip*,” you know how a simple sentence can be radically changed when passed from one person to another! We do not depend on the traditions or oral accounts of dead men; we depend on the truth of the inscribed living Word. Men die, but the Word of God lives forever.

By the grace of God, we can depend on the written Word of God—“*It is written*” and it stands written forever. We can be saved, nurtured, guided, and protected through the truth of this living Word as we trust and obey (1 Peter 1:23–25; 2:2).

Experiences Fade, but the Word Remains (2 Peter 1:16–18) The focus in this portion of Scripture is the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. The experience is recorded by Matthew (17:1ff), Mark (9:2–8), and Luke (9:28–36); yet none of those writers were actually there! However, Peter was there!

In fact, the very words that Peter used in this section (2 Peter 1:12–18) remind us of his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. He used the word *tabernacle* twice (2 Peter 1:13–14), which reminds us of Peter’s words at the Transfiguration, “*Let us make three tabernacles here*” (Matt. 17:4).

In 2 Peter 1:15, Peter used the word *decease*, which is “*exodus*” in the Greek (cf. Luke 9:31). Jesus did not consider His death on the cross a defeat; rather, it was an

Study Notes for 2 Peter

“exodus,” whereby He would deliver His people from bondage as Moses delivered Israel from Egypt! Similarly, Peter wrote of his own death as an *“exodus,”* a release from bondage.

Peter, James, and John were the only Apostles with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they were to keep silent about their experience until after the Lord was raised from the dead (Matt. 17:9). After the resurrection, they were free to tell the other what had happened on the mountain.

What was the significance of the Transfiguration? For one thing, it confirmed Peter’s testimony about Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:13–16). Peter saw the Son in His glory, and he heard the Father speak from heaven, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (2 Peter 1:17). After we put our faith in Christ and confess Him as Lord, the Holy Spirit then gives us His wonderful and powerful confirmation (*“born again”*)!

As He neared Calvary, the Transfiguration also had a special significance for Jesus Christ. It was the Father’s way of strengthening His Son for that terrible ordeal of the cross event when Jesus would be the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets fulfilled those prophecies. The Father spoke from heaven assuring the Son of His love and approval. Indeed, The Transfiguration is a divine example how suffering can lead to glory when we are in the will of God.

But there is another message that concerns the promised kingdom. In all three Gospels where the account of the Transfiguration is recorded, it is introduced with a statement about the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). Jesus promised that, before they died, some of the disciples would see the kingdom of God in power! This prophecy was fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration when our Lord revealed His glory. This was a word of assurance to the disciples, who could not grasp Jesus’ teaching about the Cross. They were perplexed about how if Jesus died, the promised kingdom would come.

This helps us understand why Peter used this event in his epistle: he was refuting the false teachings of the apostates who were saying that the kingdom of God would never come (2 Peter 3:3ff). These false teachers were denying the promise of Christ’s coming! In the place of God’s promises, these counterfeits were declaring *“cunningly devised myths”* (2 Peter 1:16) that robbed the believers of their blessed hope.

In using the word, *“myths,”* the counterfeits were teaching that such events were manufactured stories that had no basis in fact. The Greek and Roman world abounded in stories about their *gods*, which were mere human speculations attempting to

Study Notes for 2 Peter

explain the world and its origin. No matter how interesting such *myths* might be, the Christian must not to fall for them but loudly refuse them (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7).

Paul warned Timothy that the time would come when professed Christians would not want to hear true doctrine but would “turn away their ears from the truth, and... be turned unto myths” (2 Tim. 4:4). Paul also warned Titus about “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14)—apparently, even some of the Jews had abandoned their sacred Scriptures and accepted man-made substitutes.

Peter wrote a summary of what he saw and heard on the Mount of Transfiguration. He saw Jesus Christ robed in majestic glory—thereby, witnessing a demonstration of the “*power and coming*” of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ came to earth in Bethlehem, He did not display His glory openly. Of course, He revealed His glory in His miracles (John 2:11), but this was primarily for the sake of His disciples. His face did not shine, nor did He have a halo over His head: “*He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him*” (Isa. 53:2).

Peter not only saw Christ’s glory, but he heard the Father’s voice “*from the magnificent glory.*” Witnesses are people who tell accurately what they have seen and heard (Acts 4:20), and Peter was a faithful witness: Is Jesus Christ of Nazareth the Son of God? Yes, He is! How do we know? The Heavenly Father said so!

You and I were not eyewitnesses of the Transfiguration, but Peter was! Inspired by the Spirit of God, he faithfully recorded his experience for us in this letter that he wrote:

- Memories fade, but the Word of God remains!
- Experiences are subjective, but the Word of God is factually objective.
- Experiences may be interpreted in different ways by different participants, but the Word of God gives one clear message.
- What we remember about our experiences can be unconsciously distorted, but the Word of God remains the same and abides forever.

By reminding his readers of the Transfiguration, Peter affirmed several important doctrines of the Christian faith.

- He affirmed that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God. The test of any religion is, “What do you say about Jesus Christ?” If a religious teacher denies the deity of Christ, then he is a false teacher (1 John 2:18–29; 4:1–6).
- But the person of Jesus Christ is only one test; we must also ask, “And what is the work of Jesus Christ? Why did He come and what did He do?” Again,

Study Notes for 2 Peter

the Transfiguration gives us the answer; for Moses and Elijah “appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease [exodus] which He should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). His death was not simply an example, as some liberal theologians want us to believe; it was an exodus, an accomplishment. He accomplished something on the cross—the redemption of lost sinners!

- The Transfiguration affirmed the truth of the Scriptures. Moses represented the Law; Elijah represented the Prophets; both pointed to Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1–3). He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets (Luke 24:27). We believe the Bible because Jesus believed the Bible and said it was the Word of God. Those who question the truth and authority of the Scriptures are not arguing with Moses, Elijah, or Peter, but with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- This event affirmed the reality of God’s kingdom. We who have a completed Bible can look back and understand the progressive lessons that Jesus gave His disciples about the Cross and the kingdom, although at that time those twelve men were confused. They did not understand the relationship between His suffering and His glory (see Peter’s first epistle) as well as the church and the kingdom. At the Transfiguration, our Lord made it clear to His followers that His suffering would lead to glory and that the cross would ultimately result in the crown.
- There was also a very practical lesson that Peter, James, and John needed to learn, because each of these would also suffer. James was the first of the apostles to die (Acts 12:1–2). John lived a long life, but it led to exile and suffering (Rev. 1:9). Peter suffered for the Lord during his ministry and then laid down his life just as the Lord had prophesied.
- On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John learned that suffering and glory go together. The Father’s special love and approval are given to those who are willing to suffer for the sake of the Lord.
- Peter could not share his experience with us, but he shared the record of that experience so that we could have it permanently in the Word of God. It is not necessary for us to try to duplicate these experiences; in fact, such attempts would be dangerous, for the devil might give us a counterfeit experience that could lead us astray.

We have learned two important truths as we have seen these contrasts: men die, but the Word lives; experiences fade, but the Word remains.

The World Darkens, but the Word Shines (2 Peter 1:19–21)

In some respects, the world is getting better. I thank God for the advances in medicine, transportation, and communication. We can speak to more people in sermons, podcasts, or radio programs than the Apostles preached to in their entire lifetimes. We can write books that can be spread abroad and translated into many different languages.

In most areas of life, the world has made great progress, but the human heart is still wicked—all of our improvements have not really improved our lives. Medical science enables people to live longer, but there is no guarantee they will live better. Modern means of communication can enable falsehoods to travel faster and farther! Jets and rockets enable us to get places faster, but we don't have better places to go!

We should not be surprised that our world is engulfed in spiritual darkness. The Bible gives many warnings that counterfeits would invade the church with their false doctrines (cf. Matt. 7:13–29; Acts 20:28–35; Rom. 16:17–20; 2 Cor. 11:1–15; Gal. 1:1–9; Phil. 3:17–21; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3–4; 1 John 2:18–29; 4:1–6). In other words, there are repeated warnings that false teachers would invade the churches, introduce false doctrines, and lead many people astray.

Indeed, the world gets darker and darker, but the Word of God shines brighter and brighter.

Peter made three affirmations about this Word.

- It is the sure Word (v. 19a). The false teachers would attempt to discredit the promise of His coming (2 Peter 3:3ff), but the Scriptures are sure!
- It is the shining Word (v. 19b). Peter called the world “a dark place,” but God is light and His Word is light.
- It is the Spirit-inspired Word (vv. 20–21; cf. 2 Timothy 3:14–17).

Men die, but the Word lives. Experiences fade, but the Word remains. The world grows darker, but the prophetic light of the Word shines brighter.

The believer who builds his life on the Word of God and who looks for the coming of the Savior is not likely to be led astray by false teachers. He will be taught by the Spirit and grounded on the sure Word of God.

Peter's message is, “**Wake up—and remember!**” A sleeping church is the devil's playground.