

SOUL-SHAPING - How The New Testament Preaches to Christians - Part two

Teaching #2065 - Sunday, July 29th, 2018, 10:00 a.m.

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REMINDED OF THINGS WE ALREADY KNOW

2 Peter 1:12-15 - "Therefore *I intend always to remind you* of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. [13] I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to *stir you up by way of reminder*, [14] since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. [15] And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may *be able at any time to recall these things*."

I suppose there is nothing more characteristic of human life than our tendency to forget the things we already know. We can learn great truths. We can study important subjects. We can meditate on, and ponder the great thoughts of others. But we also know that, with rare exceptions, the things we put into our minds don't always stay where we file them. Things we once considered important, slip into the smog of unintentional forgetfulness.

Peter knows this. He knows that truth we *once* learned doesn't always *stay* learned. So as Peter comes to the close of this first section of his letter at **verse 15**, he knows that many people will be thinking that he hasn't really been saying anything new. He has not been unfolding any new doctrine or teaching. Yet, he wants them to know the importance of these opening words. He wants them to know they aren't above hearing what he's saying. There's a humility required here. He wants them to remember that spiritual growth and blessing come from *remembering these truths, even though they know them*. The only thing harder than *learning* the truth is *holding on* to the truth.

1) **HE WANTS THEM TO REMEMBER THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING TRUTH AND POSSESSING TRUTH**

2 Peter 1:12 - "Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though *you know them* and are *established in the truth that you have*."

There is something interesting in the way Peter says, "You've already been established in these truths. This is not the first time I've taught you this. But now it's time to *monitor the effect of these truths*. You need to be *reminded* of these things again."

He's going back to the idea he stressed in **verse 8** - "For if these qualities *are yours* and *are increasing*, they keep you from being *ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So Peter probes. "Are these truths *increasing* in your life? Are you becoming more and more *fruitful* in them? Or are they becoming *useless truth* to you? Is your Christian life just filling up with information or is the *nourishing process still gaining momentum*?"

That's the issue here. Peter is reminding them of things they already know. Perhaps, at one time, they knew them with a degree of passion. But truths lose their *grip* - their *impact* - on our minds with the passing of time. We get used to the things we know. We can start to carry truths around like extra weight around our tummies without there being any positive benefit.

Peter says, "I don't want you just to *know these truths like you know how to breathe*. I want you to *think* about them. I want you to *relish* them. I want you to *cherish* them. I want you to *practice* them. I want you to hold on to them in such a way that they *possess* you."

The idea here is not to just *learn* divine truth but to *treasure it*. *Discovering* truth isn't the end of the journey. That's why Jesus told of the man who discovered buried treasure in a field. Then He adds this man, "*...in his joy went and sold all he had to possess that field*."

2) **IN ADDITION TO OUR NATURAL FORGETFULNESS, WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT IS HOSTILE TO THE INCUBATION OF SPIRITUAL TRUTHS IN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS.**

Christians have to take this environment into account. Peter knows this. He failed the Lord at the time of His crucifixion

because of the pressure of the moment and the hostility against Jesus. ***He knows there is nothing automatic about retaining the power of spiritual convictions in this fallen world.***

Jesus talked about this very issue: **Matthew 13:19** - ***“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.”***

Jesus was careful to show that there are more than just ***natural forces*** involved in holding on to spiritual truth. This is a big problem in today’s church. Because, it’s ***in the church*** that much of the seed gets sown. They’re not sowing the seed of God’s Word over at Upper Canada Mall. Orange is the New Black is not sowing the seed of the Word. Oprah isn’t sowing the seed of God’s Word. Jesus is talking about what happens when people read their Bibles, when they go to church, when there is a specific effort made to get God’s Word into people’s minds.

He says the Devil works to ***undervalue*** the worth of Scriptural truth. He works to ***dislodge*** the truth once it’s known. He ***distracts*** us from thinking about what we’ve heard. He works hard to bubble up ***pride***, so we think we don’t need to hear this as much as someone else - some new Christian, maybe. And perhaps most of all, in our world drunken with the concepts of ***tolerance*** and the ethics of ***relativism***, he works hard to confuse ***convictions*** with ***opinions***. I want to talk about this later on in this message.

So Peter reminds these people of these truths because he knows the activity of this whole age is against them holding on to what they’ve once possessed, unless they are constantly being ***re-impressed*** with those Scriptural truths. Think about that when you stay home from church on Sunday. Whose hand do you think you’re playing into?

3) **THERE IS TEACHING HERE ABOUT HOW HEARTS ARE STIRRED UP TO FRESH LOVE AND PASSION FOR GOD**

2 Peter 1:13 - ***“I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder....”***

“I want to ***stir you up***,” Peter says. A lot of people just get nervous when the Bible uses those kinds of words. It sounds like Peter was just trying to work people up into some kind of emotional frenzy.

There are, of course, different ways in which people can be stirred up. There’s a kind of stirring up that just involves emotional excitement. This is not a bad thing, though it is usually a short-lived thing. Jesus had crowds get excited when He healed the sick or fed the hungry. John says He didn’t get too excited about those kinds of crowds.

Then there is a deeper kind of stirring up. It’s the kind of stirring up you do when you shake a bottle of salad dressing. You’re really not adding anything new to the equation. Nothing is changed. You’re just taking things that have settled way to the bottom and dropped out of circulation and bringing them to life again. You want to still ***savor everything that has settled.***

That’s what Peter is talking about. The ***mind*** is the bottle and the ***truths of Scripture*** are the salad dressing. Peter says he wants to come and take truths that have settled and lost awareness. He wants to bring them to life in their minds again so they flavor all their thinking and planning and doing.

Please notice, in doing this Peter (wise, old, experienced Peter) is saying something very important and very unpopular. Most of us need something other than what we think we need. The kind of excitement and power we’re looking for in our Christian lives isn’t going to be found in some ***new thing***. It’s going to be found in some ***very old things***. It’s going to come from things long forgotten. Look into that old Bible. Go back to that old Church. Get back to your old devotional habits. Pay attention to some very old habits of holiness.

Look at what Peter has been talking about in these opening eleven verses - ***the kind of truths he wants to stir up:***

- a) “I’m a ***servant*** of Jesus and you should think of yourself as one too(1). There’s nothing more important than being instantly and totally obedient to Jesus, just like a slave is to his master.”
- b) “You need to ***grow*** in your knowledge of God’s precious and magnificent promises (4). Nothing will build your strength for trial and persecution like filling your life with the hope of another kingdom.”

- c) “You must push back spiritual inertia. Make certain that you don’t stop and stand still in your faith. That’s like trying to stand still on a two-wheeled bicycle. There is no safe way to stop peddling. Be **diligent** about adding to the quality of your faith each day of the week. Add the virtues outlined in **verses 3 through 7.**”

So we do our duty and read Peter’s words in **verses 3-7** - “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, [4] by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. [5] For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, [7] and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.”

Now, who would have thought that teaching like that could bring renewal - could **stir people up**. But that’s exactly what Peter teaches. The part of a Christian that needs to be reached first in any renewal is **the mind**. Renewal should never **stop** with the mind. But it definitely should never **start without it**.

No Scriptural truth will become effective in your life until you **understand it**. Because if you don’t understand it, if you ever **did** put it into practice, it would only be **accidental**. And you can’t live a strong Christian life by accident. What I’m trying to say here is the Christian mind needs to be exercised not only by thinking **about** Biblical truth. That will never be enough. The Christian mind needs not only to think **about** Biblical truth, but to think about everything else **with** Biblical truth. Our **world-views** need to be converted. Our **recreation** needs to be converted. Our **entertainment** needs to be converted. Our **social life** need to be converted. Is your **money** as converted as your soul?

This leads into my next point:

- 4) **THERE IS THE CONSTANT DANGER OF CONFORMING TO THE SPIRIT OF OUR AGE AND BEGINNING TO TREAT ABSOLUTE, REVEALED TRUTH AS THOUGH IT WERE A MATTER OF CHANGING HUMAN OPINION**

This is so important to me that I want to take some time to deal with it, though I have already mentioned it earlier.

Notice two verses in this passage: **2 Peter 1:12** - “Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, **though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.**”

Then look at another verse: **2 Peter 1:15** - “And I will make every effort so that after my departure **you may be able at any time to recall these things.**”

Notice, these truths are held so consistently and rehearsed so constantly they can be summoned to remembrance at any moment anywhere. That’s when they become life-changing.

And Peter wants these people to be **established** in these great truths he’s been proclaiming. He wants them **grounded** in them - **fixed** in them. The very words he uses mean he doesn’t want them **roaming from one school of thought to another**. **Spiritual fads are for rookies**. He says the gospel they believe has to be **his gospel (1:1)**. He says the truth he proclaims has to become the **settled conviction of their lives**. They must be **“established”** in them. They’re not spiritually nomadic.

Then, in **verse fifteen**, he says these same truths are to be recalled to their minds long after he’s dead and gone. **Notice, these same truths - “And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things”(15)**. Nothing changes after Peter’s gone. Nothing gets added or deleted. The content isn’t up for grabs.

This is something desperately lacking in the mind set of the church today. People talk like somehow we’ve outgrown many things revealed in the Scriptures. Everything objectionable gets screened through the tastes of the surrounding culture. If we aren’t comfortable with it, or think someone else won’t be, we can and will find a way of adjusting it.

Now, we didn’t come to think that way by accident. In the last twenty-five years, with the odd exception, at one time or another, every person in this sanctuary has been taught by people who were **relativists**. We’ve been taught that virtually everything is a matter of opinion. And also that there is no good reason for believing that any one opinion is any better than

another. Somewhere, at one time or another, we've all been taught that only *narrow minded, judgmental people* think that one way of thinking is objectively better than another.

We are so immersed in this kind of thinking that Christians have become increasingly uncomfortable with the one *absolute foundation underneath the whole of the Christian faith - divine revelation*.

Christians are now actually starting to feel apologetic for things other people don't like in the Bible. There are many things that seem outdated, prudish, and narrow. Christians start to blush and second guess their convictions when push comes to shove.

Peter would have none of that. He's soon going to die. He wants them *established* in the truths he's been teaching. He wants to remind them so often that they won't be able to get his words out of their minds long after he's off the scene.

Now Peter is long gone to glory. But we have precious instruction from the Word about the mission of the church. Paul gives the instruction, but the idea came from Jesus Himself:

Ephesians 4:11-14 - "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; {13} until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. {14} As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."

Maturity of faith is not just *accumulating correct doctrine*. Maturity of faith means *knowing what not to believe*. You can't become mature in faith until you know how to *reject things that are contrary to the knowledge of God revealed in the Scriptures*. Only gullible children swallow whatever is put into their mouths.

5) **PASS A PURE, LIVING FAITH ON TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER YOU**

These are beautiful words, just packed with tenderness and emotion:

2 Peter 1:14-15 - "....I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. [15] **And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.**"

What should people do when they know they are going to die? It seems that Peter had very specific knowledge about his coming death. He says Jesus told him about it. We know a little bit about that:

John 21:18-19 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." [19] (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

Now, in our text, Peter says Jesus added some details about *when* this death would come - "**.... since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.**"

I wanted to close with this practical exhortation. What should dying people give their lives to? O, you may not know the *time* of your departure as Peter did, but you know the *shortness of your earthly life*. You know you don't have time to invest your life in everything. What should dying people concentrate on?

Peter tells us. "I want to influence people for Christ long after I'm gone. I want my life to build Christ's kingdom even when I'm not physically around to see it."

You have friends. You have a husband or wife. You have children. Every life touches another. Paul says we don't live to ourselves and we don't die to ourselves. Take the time to instill a godly example. Take the time to instill godly teaching. Let your words brace people against the ungodly thinking all around them. Give to *world missions*. You can plant seeds around the world that can germinate and reproduce long after you've gone to heaven. Make your *example* unforgettable. Leave a pattern that is so clearly dedicated to another kingdom that those coming after can't possibly be content living for this earthly kingdom.

Revelation 14:13 - "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

Notice, "...their deeds follow them." This isn't just their *reputation*. People can manufacture all sorts of wonderful things to say about people at funerals. Everyone turns into a saint. This isn't that. This isn't about the *words* that follow them. It's their *deeds*. They so glorified Christ in everything that *others were given courage to do the same*.

And you can't do anything better with your life than that.