

## 2 Peter 1:12-15

### Introduction

In our passage this morning, Peter begins with these words: “***THEREFORE*** I am going to be always ***reminding*** you of ***THESE THINGS***...” So obviously, in order to understand what Peter’s about to go on to say in the rest of our passage, we *have* to start out this morning by reminding ourselves of what’s already come before — “***THEREFORE*** I am going to be ***always reminding*** you of ***THESE THINGS***...” My prayer is that our growing familiarity with these words will not breed contempt, but rather a deeper and a growing and a true understanding.

“[Christ’s] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and piety, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue, 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.

And **so for this very reason, bringing all your energy to bear**, supply by your faith, an abundance of moral excellence, and by [your] moral excellence, an abundance of knowledge, and by [your] knowledge, an abundance of self-control, and by [your] self-control, an abundance of steadfastness, and by [your] steadfastness, an abundance of piety, and by [your] piety, an abundance of brotherly affection, and by [your] brotherly affection, an abundance of love.

For when **these things** belong to you and are abounding more and more, *they make you* neither useless nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For whoever does not *have these things* is blind—being diseased in his eyes—having ignored the cleansing of his former sins.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more zealous to confirm your calling and election, for *as long as you do these things* you will most certainly never fall.

For in this way [in doing **these things**] there will be richly provided to you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And now, in our passage this morning, Peter writes:

**I. 2 Peter 1:12** — Therefore I am going to be always reminding you of **these things**, even though you know them and are [already] established in the truth that you have.

If I could just say at the beginning, this is a profound passage – and it desperately needs to be rediscovered and understood anew and afresh in the church today. Peter begins with “*Therefore...*” *Why* is Peter going to be always reminding us of these things? *Because* what’s at stake is our final salvation. What’s at stake is ***either*** being richly provided an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – ***or else*** falling from our profession of Christ into eternal destruction and ruin. This is *why* Peter says that he’s going to be ***always reminding*** us of these things. Underlying all of Scripture is the ultimate urgency of eternal

matters. The Scriptures aren't just a helpful aid to living life are they? They're the revelation of eternal life in Christ *and also* of everlasting death and judgment outside of Christ. That's why we should always pay much closer attention to the things that we have heard, and that we hear each week in the preaching of God's Word (cf. Heb. 2:1). That's why Peter says that he will be **always reminding** us of these things. But reminding us of *what* things?

So far, "these things" has always referred specifically to the list of seven virtues in verses 5-7 (cf. 1:8a, 9a, 10b). Here, too, Peter seems to be referring "technically" to the seven virtues (the ESV still translates, "these qualities"), but looking back, now, at the whole section we know we can't separate out the Christian virtues from their Gospel context. What Peter's really saying is that he'll always be reminding us of the *whole* Gospel – the Gospel as a completed work in our lives, the Gospel as a guarantee and promise, the Gospel as moral obligation *and* enablement, the Gospel as warning, and the Gospel as an eschatological, future hope. To paraphrase one commentator, "The content of Peter's message [and what it's so essential that he be always, constantly reminding us of] is [ultimately] no more than the basic Christian instruction which all Christians have [already] received." (Bauckham) That's why he calls it "**reminding**" and that's why he goes on to say: "even though you **know** these things and are [already] **established** in the **TRUTH that you have**."

Brothers and sisters, what *is* the "truth" that we *already have* and that we're *already established in*? Once again, it's just the **Gospel teaching** in all of its different aspects and in all of its fullness (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10-13). What is the *truth*? It's the Gospel that gave us new life, and cleansed us, and sealed us in the **past**.

- Ephesians 1:13 — In him you also, when you heard **the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, **were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**.
- James 1:18 — Of his own will **he brought us forth by the word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

What is the *truth*? It's the Gospel that's constantly sanctifying us and changing us in the **present** (cf. 2 Pet. 2:2).

- Titus 1:1 — Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect **and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness**...
- 3 John 3-4 — For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth... I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are **walking in the truth**.

What is the *truth*? It's the Gospel that will most certainly glorify us and transform us in resurrection power in the **future**.

- Colossians 1:5 — ...because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. *Of this* you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel.

So as Christians, the *truth* is what we already have – it's the whole Gospel that we already know. When Peter speaks of the truth "that you *have*" he's not implying that there's still more truth out

there that we don't have. His point is the exact opposite – As Christians we already have the *whole* truth, and we already know the *whole* Gospel. Think about that! Think about this precious possession that we already *have* in full! But should this lead us to be complacent? Should this cause us to be careless and self-assured since, after all, there's no other truth that we still have to gain? Peter says that *even though* we already know the whole Gospel and are already established in the truth that we have, he will *always* be *reminding* us of *these things*. Why? Because he would not have us be moved – and he would not have us “forget” (cf. 2 Pet. 1:9). We know from last week that to “forget” is to fall – to “forget” leads always to eternal destruction. So that means that in reminding us, Peter isn't just telling us information, he's calling us to action. In being *always* reminded, what we have is *not* new information, but a constantly renewed call to action – to never forget. That's why he says in the next verse:

□ 2 Peter 1:13a —I think it right, as long as I am in this [earthly dwelling], to *stir you up [to provoke and rouse you] by way of reminder...*

**Remembering** the Gospel is ultimately about “*doing*.” **Remembering** the truth is ultimately about *perseverance in all of the Christian virtues*. The Apostle John says:

□ 1 John 2:21 — I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

So John writes to the Christians not to impart new information to them, but to remind them of the truth they already know in full – so that they might *continue* standing firm in that truth, not deceived by any lie. Jude also writes:

□ Jude 3 — Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for *the faith that was once for all delivered* to the saints.

The faith—the *whole* faith—has been *once for all delivered* to us, but now we must contend for that faith. And so Jude goes on to write:

□ Jude 5 — Now *I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it*, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

Certainly Jude's readers hadn't forgotten this piece of information (“that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe”), but they were in danger of no longer “*fully knowing*” it – of “*forgetting*” that this had implications for their own lives. So what does Jude do? He doesn't tell them something new. He gives them no new information. He simply reminds them of the basic Christian instruction that they already know and once *fully* knew. Therefore, what does this tell you Jude's readers most *need*? They don't need new information—they don't need any new truth—they only need to be reminded of the truth they already have. One commentator writes: “The apostolic faith, in which Jude's readers were *thoroughly instructed at the time of their conversion*, is *definitive* and *complete*; it does *not need supplementing*.” (Bauckham)

It's very important to grasp this reality – that Jude, and John (cf. Rev. 3:3), and Peter, and also Paul (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 4:17; Eph. 2:11; 2 Tim. 1:6; 2:8, 14; Titus 3:1) were all writing primarily “only” to remind their readers of things they already knew and the truth that they had already received and in which they had already been established.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:1–2 — Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware...
- 2 Thessalonians 2:5 — Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

And why were the New Testament writers constantly reminding? So their readers wouldn't *forget* – so they wouldn't ever be swayed or moved away.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 — So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

Are you seeing, then, what we constantly need as Christians? What we desperately need is to be constantly reminded of the Gospel and of the truth that we already know and in which we've already been established. Anyone who comes along teaching anything new, anything novel, anything additional, is not to be listened to. Anyone who does more than simply remind you constantly of the things you already know is to be rejected. This is profound. You don't come here on Sunday mornings to learn something new. You don't come here to be able to go away saying “I didn't know that”; “I never thought about that before”; “that's a new insight.” There's a sense in which these things might occasionally happen (like perhaps right now), but these “new insights” are not *why* we come. Brothers and sisters, we come only to be *reminded*.

This is why you never need to worry about “memorizing” all the information that you hear in this sermon, or in any of the sermons on Sunday. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that a relief? Because the things you really need to go away with are the things you *already know* and that I'm only reminding you of. Yes, we're all learning, but it's not so much that we're learning “new information.” What we're learning is the word of truth—the Gospel. We're learning it *more deeply* and being *more established* in it in order that we might be stirred up, and provoked, and roused to persevere in all the Christian virtues every second of every minute of every hour of every day of our lives. If, at the most basic level, I'm only telling you things you already know, then there's no need to worry about remembering the things you didn't know before. There's no need to worry about remembering the three main points, or even the one main point. There's no need to worry about remembering the numerous specific insights, or thoughts, or concepts. By God's grace, we simply go away every Sunday having been richly *reminded* and fed.

While I want to always work at making messages no longer than they need to be, it's these realities that can really help us and encourage us in listening faithfully to “longer” messages. Once again, brothers and sisters, I want to encourage you; I believe this will truly release us and set us free as we listen to the preaching of *God's Word* each Sunday. Sometimes we can easily get overwhelmed with “information,” partly because we feel like it's our job on Sunday to learn

and to retain new information. But the good news is that all the “information” in this sermon is only given to help remind you of the things you already know, and the truth you already have. If there’s one particular part of the sermon that the Holy Spirit burns into our minds and brings to our attention throughout the week, that’s wonderful! But if not—if we don’t remember anything *in particular*—we’ve still been fed and reminded and we still know that the Holy Spirit is working through our exposure to the Scriptures – much like we eat a meal, and don’t remember the following day *exactly* what we ate, nevertheless, we know that because of that meal, we are still strong and healthy today.

I would say, however, that if you really want to remember the sermon throughout the week, and if the sermon was truly a faithful and a biblical sermon, then the very best way to remember that sermon is to simply read and meditate on the *text* that was preached – not the notes or the handouts that you’ve been given, but the text and the Scripture itself. This is why I avoid man-made outlines, because I’m convinced that more often than not the outlines must be artificially imposed on the text, and so in the end it’s the outlines that we’re trying to retain rather than the Scriptures themselves. It’s the preacher’s original take on the text or his unique approach to the text—it’s *this* “new information”—that we’re coming to hear instead of coming to be simply **REMINDED** of the **TRUTH** that we already have. Once again, it’s true that I include “*information*” every week that may be “new” to you, but the standard for including any such information is that it contributes simply to reminding you and fortifying you in the things you already know. Therefore, by God’s grace, and by God’s grace alone, the *best* way to truly “remember” Sunday’s sermon is to simply read and meditate on the passage that was preached all throughout the week. It’s as simple as that. Why is this? It’s because *I* never told you anything new – not ultimately. And, for that matter, neither did Peter (cf. 2 Pet. 3:1-2). Are we really comprehending this? Are we really comprehending how this should impact our listening to Sunday’s sermon *and* our reading of God’s Word from day to day?

“Therefore,” Peter says, “***I AM GOING TO BE*** always [constantly] reminding you of these things.” The Greek, here, is very unusual and even a little difficult. What does Peter mean by the future tense: “***I am going*** to be *always* reminding you of these things”? Is he planning to write them daily or weekly letters? Is he planning to go and live with them and preach to them every week? How is it that he’s going to “keep on,” “constantly” reminding them of these things? We ask this question especially in light of what Peter says next:

**II. 2 Peter 1:13–14** — I think it right, as long as I am in this [earthly] dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my [earthly] dwelling will be soon, as also our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

So now we learn that for all the churches scattered throughout Asia Minor, this letter is Peter’s “last will and testament. The special impetus for Peter to write this letter is the reality that he knows he has only a very short time left on this earth (the putting off of his earthly dwelling will be soon). Peter was then at least sixty years old. He may have already been able to see the signs of his approaching martyrdom in the things that were happening in Rome. So as he considers his own advancing age, and the storm clouds gathering and building in Rome—if not already breaking—he remembers Jesus’ words to him on the shores of the Sea of Galilee nearly forty

years earlier. After asking the much younger Peter three times if he loved Him, and after calling this much younger Peter three times to “feed my lambs,” “tend my sheep,” “feed my sheep,” Jesus then said to him:

□ 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.”

Peter knows, now, that Jesus’ word is about to be fulfilled, and so instead of forgetting the sheep in light of his own approaching death, Peter is stirred to write to them one more time – and, as he no doubt anticipates, for the last time. In other words, this letter *is* Peter’s *final* REMINDER. This is his last will and testament before he dies; that’s *why* he says: “I know that the putting off of my earthly dwelling will be soon.” But if this is so, and if Peter doesn’t anticipate living long enough to have any more communications with the Christians in Asia Minor, then how can Peter write in the previous verse, using the future tense, “I am going to be always [constantly] reminding you of these things”? And how can Peter go on to write in the next verse, using the future tense once more:

**III. 2 Peter 1:15** — And *I will make every effort* so that after my departure you may be able constantly to recall **these things**.

The Greek future tense here is even more awkward than in verse twelve. Peter says, “I will *then*—in *those future days*—make every effort...” But what can Peter possibly be thinking of? Has he forgotten already what he just said in verses 13-14 about his imminent death? He obviously hasn’t because he goes on to say, “I will [then, in those future days] make every effort *so that after my [soon] departure* you may be able constantly [at any and all times] to recall *these things*.”

Do you see what Peter’s saying? Peter is envisioning this letter being read, and reread, and read and reread, and read again, and again, and again, and again even after his death. In other words, it’s through this letter—and through the constant, repeated reading of this same letter—that Peter is going to be always, constantly, reminding us of these *same* things – these things that we already know and this truth that we already have and are established in. One commentator explains: “We should remember that the ancients understood how *letters* ‘stand in for *living speech*, and for the living presence of the speakers, each representing its writer to its recipient in his or her inevitable absence”” (Green; quoting Trapp). The “inevitable absence,” in this case, will be caused by Peter’s death; and so it’s through this “last will and testament” and through the constant repeated reading of this last will and testament, that Peter envisions himself—even after his death—making every effort so that we may be able constantly (at any and all times) to *recall* these things.

## **Conclusion**

There is a **crisis** even in the conservative evangelical church today of a lack of confidence in the true and full sufficiency of Scripture. Brothers and sisters, let us despise all that is novel and

new, and strive only to be reminded constantly of the truth that has already been delivered to us in full. Let us approach every Sunday sermon with the expectation that the best way to review that sermon in the week ahead will be to simply read and meditate on the text that was preached. Let us lay aside the empty and dangerous craving for new insights, and new information. Let us beware lest we should in any way forget or be moved away from that truth in which we have been established. And in all of this, may we be set free to truly hear the preaching of God's word as we ought – never stressing about retaining information, but simply listening in order to be reminded. In all of this, may we be set free to truly read the word of God for ourselves as we ought – never stressing about finding something new (and *never* taking our chief delight in finding something new!), but simply listening again, and again, and again, in order that we might be always, constantly **REMINDED**.