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## The Second Epistle of Peter

### *Our Temporary Earthly Dwelling*

*September 17, 2017*

**Sermon Text:** 2 Peter 1:12-21

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew 17:1-13

Peter has been telling us these things:

1. Every Christian has the same kind of faith (vs 1). We have received it from the Lord through the perfect, righteous life and work of Christ.
2. This faith (vs 3) provides us with everything concerning true life and godliness. We have this life and we have the ability to live it.
3. The precious and magnificent promises Christ has made to us (the gospel) actually make us partakers of the “divine nature.” The Christian, having been born

again and made a new creation, has escaped bondage to evil (vs 4).

4. Therefore, because all of these things are true, not only are we NOT to sit back and presume upon the Lord – “I’m saved, how I live doesn’t matter now.” No, we are called to the very opposite of such presumption:

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10-11)

We know that there are many people all around us today who are just absolutely certain (so they say) that they are Christians. That they are right with God and headed for heaven. And yet, they do not evidence in their lives even a remote portion of this “diligence” Peter is speaking of. They are careless. They couldn’t care less, it

seems, about diligently studying God's Word, or about faithfully gathering together with Christ's people, or about being separate from the world and living out practical holiness. To look at them you would never guess that these are people who, supposedly, have "escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

And Peter is warning us not to ever think such people can be certain of their calling and election. It is only in diligently obeying the Lord, in diligently living out our faith that such assurance can be known:

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 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. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the

eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-11)

Set up for a fall. That is what carelessness in living out our faith does. It sets us up to stumble:

"...for if you practice these qualities you will never fall."

Cruisin' for a fall. That describes the status of so many, doesn't it? But we can have the assurance and certainty that our "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to us" if we work out this faith we have. This is not a denial of grace nor of the gospel. It is a result and fruit of it.

Think of it. An "entrance into the eternal kingdom." We know that many people will stand before Christ on that Day when He comes to judge the world and they are going to be shocked to learn that the door is shut to them. There is no entrance for them. "I never knew you." Quite the opposite for Christ's true people. Christ is ours and Christ is the Door.

These are the things Peter is anxious for us to learn. Let's see what else he has to say to us now:

2 Peter 1:12-21 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.

(16) For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17) For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," (18) we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

(19) And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, (20) knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were

carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Let's look particularly now at verses 12-15. Listen to them again:

(12) 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.

Ready for departure. That is how Peter lived his life, and it is how we should be living ours too. Yes, Peter had been told by Christ that he would be martyred:

2 Peter 1:13-14 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.

But we all have been told that our time "in these bodies" is going to end as well and in fact while experiencing these "tents" of ours wear out is no fun, the "putting off of" them for our

permanent home is going to be a glorious day. And so we live, ready for departure.

We should take time to notice carefully how Peter, and therefore how the Christian, can think about who we truly are. Notice:

- As long as I am in this body
- The putting off of my body
- After my departure

This is a huge encouragement, so don't miss it. Let's say that I decide to move from one place to another...even someplace far away...Alaska, say. So I move out of my present house, say good-byes, and move into my new house. Have I ceased to exist? Of course not. I simply changed residences and I departed.

Furthermore, "I, ME, JEFF" am not one and the same with my house. I would still be me, it's just that I live in a different place. And so it is with us now in these physical bodies. YOU are not so identified with your body that when your body dies and you depart, you are no more. No way! Peter keeps talking about HIMSELF, "I, MY" as a person even after he "departs."

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 (13) But we do not want you to be uninformed,

brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

And "falling asleep" does not mean that when the believer dies he is in an unconscious state. NO! That phrase always refers to the believer's *body* awaiting the resurrection.

### Reminding One Another

Why should I attend a local church or if that is not possible, why should every Christian at least seek out fellowship in some way with other genuine Christians? Because just like Peter, we are to be always *reminding one another of these things*. No matter how old we grow as a Christian, no matter how spiritually mature we become, we need to be regularly reminded of the promises of God, of the truths of God's Word, even if we already know them and are well established in them. Peter says that as long as he is in his earthly body he is going to "stir them up by way of reminder." He is even leaving these "stirrings up" in written form for them so that "after his departure" they will be able to read them again and again lest they forget and grow careless.

## The Certainty of the Word

Peter now gives us some of the clearest evidence to be found in Scripture for its trustworthiness. Listen again:

2 Peter 1:16-21 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17) For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," (18) we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

One of the surest evidences that the Bible is true and that our faith is not in some myth is that God's dealings with His people in history in Christ *are interwoven into human history*. You have it stated for example in Hebrews:

Hebrews 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

God has revealed Himself and spoken

to us by invading our space and time.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And this is the thing Peter is pointing us to. He says that we can have certain faith in God's promises, in the things Christ and now His Apostles are telling us, because they are not some "cleverly devised myths" some wicked religious wolves invented. No. Peter and the apostles were "eyewitnesses of his majesty." And he refers us to of course the mount of transfiguration as we call it. Peter was there. He saw and He heard the glory of Christ. He heard the Father's own validation of Christ as His Son. It was somewhat of another Moses on the mountain hearing God's voice event. Moses and Elijah (the Law and the Prophets) were there. Only this time the shining was not a reflection of God's glory on the face of Moses (which glory faded) but the glory emanated from Christ Himself! The glory of Christ and His Word is perfectly consistent then with the Law and the Prophets as we see all three standing together.

Peter, as he says here, was not the only witness to this:

Matthew 17:1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

The unbelieving world thinks that the Bible and the Christian faith is just a bunch of myths. The inventions of men. So they blow it off. But in doing so they disregard an incredible amount of objective evidence for its truth. Peter reassures us that we have not been duped. Christ is real. His promises are real. His Word is truth and we must diligently apply ourselves to it.

He continues:

(19) And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, (20) knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. God has given us all kinds of proofs to show us this is the case in order that

“the prophetic word” might be “more fully confirmed” in our thinking and thereby we might pay closer heed to it.

The Bible, says Peter, is like a lamp shining in a dark place. So here you are, let's say, in a deep, dark cave far below the surface of the earth. Someone turns on a small flashlight in that pitch blackness and says “follow me.” How closely do you think you would pay attention to that light?

Well, Christ is our Light – the Light and life of men as John put it. And this world is darkness:

Matthew 4:16 the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

1 John 2:8-11 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. (9) Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. (10) Whoever loves his brother abides

in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. (11) But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

And what happens to people in that cave who refuse to look at the light, or who are careless and fail to pay close attention to it? They stumble and fall and might even perish. That is what Peter is saying – *to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.*

This will not always and forever be necessary. The Day is coming. There will be no darkness in the new creation. The truth of Christ and His glory will be shining everywhere. But not now. Now we live in a world of darkness, of evil, of deceiving lies where an enemy actively works to our destruction. So pay attention to Christ. Pay attention to His Word.

We believe in the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, the doctrines Peter is stating here. Listen to it set out in our confession of faith:

The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of

councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.

Delivered by the Spirit. That is what Peter is telling us here. When he says “no prophecy of Scripture” he is not only speaking of a “foretelling” type prophecy in which Scripture announces some future event. No, what Peter means by “prophecy” is that EVERY WORD of the Bible is the word of God spoken to us through His appointed prophet or apostle. A prophetic word then is a word from God and it is given without error.

Scripture then is not the opinion of man. It is not even the human *interpretation* of God and His works. “Well, I think that this is what the cross means.” Volumes and volumes of so-called “theology” have been written that are just that. Man’s interpretation of God. But the Bible, says Peter, this Book that is God’s Prophetic Word, *interprets itself*. Everything in it is God’s explanation and interpretation of Himself and His works and it is delivered to us without error through the Holy Spirit “moving” men so that they spoke “from God.”

Therefore, you can believe it. You can trust it. You can look to it as a light in a dark place and follow it.

The longer I have been a Christian and a teacher of God's Word, the more my certainty in it as truth has grown and the less faith I have in man's writings.

Now, the stage is set for Peter to address a major theme of this letter (and largely of 1 Peter as well). Here it is and we see why Peter is so concerned that we remain diligent in reminding ourselves of and reviewing God's Word:

2 Peter 2:1-3 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. (3) And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

- There WILL BE false prophets among you
- MANY will follow them
- Their motivation is one of greed

and exploitation of others for their own wicked purposes

And notice carefully that a "false prophet" is a person who claims they are speaking from God but in fact are not. This does not have to be a preacher in a pulpit (though there are many there), but it can be "good ol' Mr. Smith or Mrs. Jones, the pillar of the local church" who can in many ways be the most wicked and deceiving.

Peter then is about to warn us of these evil ones, tell us what their motives and methods are, and to pronounce exactly what God thinks of them. You will see that Peter, speaking for the Lord, is not going to "play nice" in exposing them.

There, then, is where we will plan to resume next time.