

Personal Testimony

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] Now we like to spend some time together looking at Scripture and seeing what God's living word has to say to us in our lives and to teach us about Christ and about the Gospel and about our own lives as Christians and to challenge us, to challenge people here who might not be Christians to think about the significance and the importance of the truth and the urgency of dealing with that truth in our lives.

But I want to do three things by way of introduction and ask you to involve yourselves in this very quickly. First, to imagine that Peter was your preacher here.

So imagine that, because this letter was written by Peter, the apostle, and I want to imagine that you to imagine what it would be like to have him write this to you and for him to be your preacher here.

And the second thing I want you to do is I want you to pray that the leadership here and the preachers here will be like him, that we will learn from this apostle and that we will be like him in our leadership and in our preaching.

Pray for that. But then in the third place I want you to recognize that Peter is far more than simply the preacher to this people. He's not simply the itinerant preacher that's going around both preaching and leading people to Christ and then writing letters to them.

[1 : 28] He's more than just that. He is foundational to the Christian church because he did a apostle and the church built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

And when he wrote these words, he wrote under divine inspiration. And so we recognize that these words aren't just the words of a preacher to his people, but they are the words of God to the church.

They are broader than just what might have been a historic document that we can look at and take kind of general advice from. We believe and understand that this has become part of God's scripture and that is recognized as such that therefore has more than just a passing interest to us, it has divine authority to speak into our lives.

So while we see Peter and recognize him as a good example that we can learn from, we see that the words he is given are given by divine inspiration, which he speaks about later in this section with regard to the prophets, that the prophecies never had their origin in the will of man but men spoken from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So what I want to do this morning is just briefly introduce three characteristics about Peter that are significant and important for leadership and also for all of us as Christians, but then focus more specifically on the teaching that he gives here in this passage.

[3 : 01] But the first thing I want to say about Peter is that he clearly knows the people to whom he is writing, okay? He is no stranger to them. Peter knows his people.

He says in verse 12, I will always remind you of these things even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. Earlier he calls them his brothers, they are like family to him.

Later on in the letter he calls them dear friends and he knows them. He knows who they are. He knows the situation they find themselves in. He understands what is happening.

He knows them spiritually. He knows how much they know and he then teaches them from God and encourages them also in their faith.

So he knows his people and that is a great aspiration for us as preachers and leaders in the church and it is a great prayer for you to make for your leaders and preachers that we would know each other but also that as a people we would know one another spiritually.

[4 : 06] It is a great congregational ethos to have is that we gather together. It is not just about the Sunday preach.

It is not just about the Sunday worship but we recognise and know and understand one another and do so as leaders and people together.

As Peter describes himself as a servant of the people. So the leaders are servants of the people and as we know one another and know each other's spiritual means because primarily that is what Peter says here.

I know them and I know where you are spiritually. That makes a great difference. That is where the atmosphere of effective teaching is at its best.

When we know and love and respect one another that is where we will learn from one another. As a family together in Christ and so we learn from Peter's knowledge of his people as being a great example of leadership and of ethos for a body of people.

[5 : 13] But he also knows his own mortality. He knows his own mortality. In verse 14 he says because I know I will soon put his body, that is the tent of his body aside because as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

Now there is a general truth here and a specific truth. He generally knows that he is mortal. He is not going to last forever. But more specifically he knows he is nearly going to die.

He is near the end of his life. He says clearly that Lord Jesus is made known to him, that his end is near. He had a prophecy that is given to us in John's Gospel from Jesus about how he would die.

At least general details about how he would die. And general church history reminds us that it was shortly after this time that Peter was at least Christian traditions, he is martyred, crucified, possibly upside down by Nero during the time of his great persecution of the church.

He was going to die. He was going to die soon. Peter was going to leave the church. But the great thing is he is not a self obsessed leader. He is not bemoaning this reality.

[6 : 27] He kind of almost is incidental in passing this information on. He is not bitter about it. His focus is on Jesus, who to go and meet is far better, but also on the needs of the people.

And that is a great characteristic and a great emphasis that he has. And it is a good one for leadership and it is a good one for all of us.

The church is not about us. It is not about our self importance, about our service. It is about this recognition and the importance of knowing our mortality.

Knowing we are only here for a short time. Our lives are passing swifter as we were told in the Old Testament in a weaver shuttle. We are moving forward. We are moving on. And to look at our lives in the light of that.

And look at our service in the light of that. And look at our self image and our self centredness in the light of that also. He knows his own mortality.

[7 : 27] And he knows also the third thing is that the work goes on. And it is related to that second point, isn't it? He knows the work goes on.

In verse 15 he says, I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. It is great, isn't it? He isn't predicating the work on his own personality or his own leadership.

He says, this is Christ's church. This is Christ's work. It is not mine and it will go on absolutely fine without me.

It is about the body of Christ with Christ as the head. Yes, he puts in place structures and leaders and leaders come and go and all of that. That is Christ who is the head of his body, which is the church.

Isn't that a great attitude? And isn't it great that Peter, the apostle Peter, was thinking about succession, thinking about the work going on. Not him and not his position and not his apostolic privileges, but it was the work going on.

[8 : 31] And so in the church here, we're always going to be, you know, we're spending a lot of time in strategy in the next few weeks and months as leaders. What we're doing is seeking the best for the kingdom and for the cause and for the work so that almost we can get to the place where we could as leaders walk away and the work goes on.

Succession because it is Christ's work and Christ's focus and we are serving ministering servants to Christ. So these are three kind of as it were introductory statements about Peter's leadership.

But what I want to focus on is great teaching in this section. Wonderful teaching both as we see his character and we learn from that in Scripture, but also what he says.

He says two very important things here. He says don't forget and he says pay attention. That's what God says through Peter to us.

He says don't forget and he says pay attention. See that first section verses 12 to 15 is all about not forgetting. Remember the church here was struggling.

[9 : 44] The people were struggling. They were struggling with opposition from outside but more specifically from bad heretical teaching from inside the church.

And he is focusing them back onto the truth of the apostolic message of the gospel. Now in the old days in schools they talked about three basics, the three R's.

Reading, writing, arithmetic. That's what they talked about as being the basics of school work. I was talking a couple of years ago with my children about school and I think it was Joe that said something like did you use a slate at school?

I said well do you think I am? But we did talk about these things that that was the basis of learning in school. The three R's, reading, writing and arithmetic.

But Peter here uses three R's, three very significant R's. He says remind, refresh and remember. And they are all different ways of saying the same thing.

[10 : 48] All different ways of saying don't forget. Don't forget basic important truth. So I will always remind you of these things.

Isn't that a great statement to start with? Even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth. Can you imagine the people as it were opening this letter?

Well here's a letter from the apostle. Here's a letter from Peter. Wonder what new wonderful insights he's going to tell us. What's he going to give us that will inspire us to keep us going? What's he going to tell us about Jesus?

Anticipation of great new truth but no such thing. He goes back to the truths that he knows they already know and that they are firmly established in.

Sometimes you can be a spiritual snob and you can come along to church looking for something wonderfully new and something great and insightful that we have never heard before because you know you've moved beyond the basics and you need something much more significant.

[11 : 47] Well I tell you I will not find it here. And if you're looking for it here then I would encourage you just to leave because you'll not find it. You'll find here the truth of God's word and you'll find that all of us are encouraged to go back to the truth of God's word.

It is the importance of repetitive remembering. You know we don't like to admit sometimes but we have a tendency in practice to forget, to be practical atheists in our lives.

And so he's saying remember. I want to remind you. I want you to be refreshed. I want you to think about these truths again. You know sometimes how it is with I think maybe they say it more of Scottish people than anyone that we don't suffer famous people well.

You know we kind of we would say to someone who's famous and maybe getting a bit big for their boots or who doesn't live in Scotland anymore and who's gone to live in summer and it's not that much of a loss and expensive, we say don't forget your roots.

Don't forget where you came from. Don't forget who you are. And we kind of we knock down people that are on pedestals as a nation. We're good at that I think maybe.

[13 : 07] But isn't it important for us spiritually to do the same thing that we always, God is this exactly what God is saying. He said don't forget who you are. Don't forget where you've come from.

Don't forget your spiritual need. Don't forget that you cried out for salvation and you needed salvation because you like the rest of humanity fell far short of the glory of God.

And you see what Paul, what Peter is saying here is not that we have a lapse in memory. He's not saying learn a good memorization technique, however good that might be to remember catechism and to remember truth.

He's not saying improve your memory here. That's not what he's talking about. He's recognizing that it's not a lapse in memory, generally speaking. It's a deliberate focus elsewhere that we deliberately choose as it were to forget because of the cost, because of the embarrassment, because of the alienation, because of the commitment.

In the same way that the church here was tending to forget what they had, what they possessed, what they owned, because it was so difficult.

[14 : 22] And so they were choosing to forget what Jesus had done, choosing to forget how significant it was, choosing to forget His promises. So it's about in our Christian lives, it's about infusing our Christian lives with the ability to recall, to remember, to infuse that into how we live our Christian lives, so that we're always remembering and recalling and doing what God wants us to do.

And isn't it interesting? He says, you know this and you're firmly established in it. So what is it? What is it that He wants us to remember and to recall and to be refreshed in?

Well, it goes back to what He said in the previous verses that we looked at before, so we'll not spend much time on it. Just the knowledge of Christ, this insurably deep knowledge of Christ, the promises of God, the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, you know the godliness, perseverance, self-control, brotherly kindness, love, these things.

He's wanting these things to be remembered, to be refreshed with, to be recalled. And why do we always go back to that here?

Why will everything we do be based on that? Because it's a bottomless treasure. That's why. Do you think it's boring to go back to Jesus Christ and to the cross and to salvation and to the message and to the unsearchable riches of the ethics of Christ and of the morality of Christ that He gives us and of the teaching of being brought from darkness to light?

[16 : 03] We can never graduate from that because of who Christ is and because of what He's given us. So the false teachers here in this passage, in this, that he's addressing later on, we're coming with fabulous new truths, wonderfully exciting and interesting, but not God's truth and not salvation truth and not light but darkness.

Why? Why is it so important that we go back and keep going back to these truths? Because of remaining sin in our hearts that cause memory lapses.

Because we fail to appreciate the grace and the peace and the joy of Christ. Why does a husband cheat on his wife? Why does a wife cheat on her husband?

How can they do that? Because they forget. They choose to forget. They choose to forget what they have, what they had, what has been committed, the vows that have been taken.

They have to forget. They have to make that choice in order to go down the road that they go down. And God says, we need to remember. We need to be refreshed.

[17 : 21] We need to recall. That's why He gives us one day in seven. To remember Him, He says, remember Him and remember the escape from Exodus, the redemption that I worked.

Remember. Remember our spiritual redemption. That's why He gives us sacrament as often as we take it, to do this in remembrance of Me. Why do we use it because we have memory lapses? No.

The reason we have memory lapses is because we choose to forget. We choose to choose sin. We choose to forget who we are and where we've come from.

So don't forget, He says. That's the first big thing He says here. The second big thing He says here is pay attention. And that's really in the second section.

He says, it's important that we pay attention to these things. In verse 19 He says, and we have the word of the prophets made more certain, you will do well to pay attention to it.

[18 : 20] You can imagine, can't you? Going back to school in the history lesson, you're drifting wildly and thinking about something else. Reminds everyone. And then the teacher sees you and claps her hands and says, pay attention.

Now that may or may not be significant, but maybe if you're 30,000 feet up in a plane and you're going to sky dive and someone is telling you what you need to do when you jump out of the plane and you're not listening.

And He says, pay attention. Yeah, and you want to pay attention, don't you? History will come and go and history lessons will. Some people are more interested in them than others.

You're diving from a plane at 30,000 feet, everyone needs to pay attention. But here He's saying, when it's important, we need to pay attention. And you have a duty this morning before God and a privilege before God to pay attention.

This is God who says this through Peter, His apostle. He says, pay attention to what's being said because it's hugely significant. We don't like that, do we really? But like even God saying to us, pay attention.

[19 : 28] But He asks us to don't forget because He loves us, because He cares, because we're His children as believers. And He says, pay attention.

Pay attention to God's voice and to the words of the prophets. So we pay attention to God's voice. And here Peter is kind of sealing His authority and sealing His right to say what He's saying as an apostle because He's reminding them of the authenticity of His message because He was one as was the Mark of Apostle who physically was with Christ and who saw Christ and who was with Christ.

And here in this passage from verse 12 to 15, He's talking about the transfiguration that's mentioned in the gospels where Jesus is on top of the mountain with Moses and Elijah and He is transformed.

So His glory is revealed. However, amazing that must have been, we're not really told much about it. We're just explained that His glory was revealed to the disciples and they didn't know what to do.

It was so incredible and so amazing. And so here He's reminding us that this message is coming from the glorious God who in verse 1, remember we saw amazingly, He says this is the God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[20 : 59] So it's God who was revealed in His Trinitarian person of sonship on the mountain. And God the Father who speaks from the mountain at the same time, this is my Son whom I love with Him, I'm well pleased.

And it's an amazing picture and it's an amazing link to the Old Testament and to the prophets and to the message of God and to the further revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

And there's Trinitarian reflections all through it as it's the Father coming to the Son and then later on we have the Peter speaking about those who were carried along by the Holy Spirit bringing God's word.

And so you've got this marvelous multifaceted truth that God's voice spoke through the cloud when Jesus was on the transfiguration. Before He went to the cross said, this is my Son whom I love, listen to Him.

So Jesus was the Savior who had come well pleasing to God. Listen, you know, listen to Him, isn't it amazing? I'm well pleased. And the passages in the gospel says, listen to Him and we're reminded here of God's voice that we're to pay attention to.

[22 : 16] This is God who seals what Jesus is doing as the only way to avoid death and hell and the only way to receive life and Christ.

Well pleasing to God. God's stamp of approval. And Peter saying here, you're tempted to listen to the false teachers who are bringing a flash fancy new gospel that isn't the gospel and that isn't the truth.

And he's saying, I want you to go back and remember and found yourselves in what you already know because it's based on this Jesus who is God whose work was well pleasing to the Father and that is the only way.

And Peter saying to them and he's saying to us, to whom are you entrusting yourself? Are you listening to false teaching and false truth or giving up and forgetting or are you committing yourself to the Christ who alone is God's answer and God's hope and who transforms us and changes us.

The only way of when we die and go to meet with God that God will say, this is my son whom I love with him or with her child son or daughter I'm well pleased.

[23 : 41] The only time that verdict will be declared miss is if we are covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If we have taken Jesus to be our savior so that the verdict that was given on him as the perfect one becomes the verdict that's declared on us the imperfect ones who are nonetheless saved by his grace because we come to him.

So there will be one big important day that you will all face that I will face to you that Peter faced and remembered and it will be when we go to meet with God. What will his verdict be?

Because he says here that's why Peter's so determined that we pay attention isn't it? We don't forget because Christ is the Savior who alone can cover us with his righteousness so that the verdict is a positive one, is a blessed one as a grace rather than depart from me I never mean.

God's voice. But also he says to pay attention to the word of the prophets made more certain in verse 19. We have the word of the prophets made more certain you will do well to pay attention to his light shining in a dark place and he's saying the prophets here didn't just give their own word, didn't just give their own interpretation what they did was they prophesied and one of the marks of genuine prophecy was that that prophetic truth became true and so as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit we find Peter saying here that these words of the prophets are more certain because they have come true in Jesus and they are absolutely believable.

They spoke of better things. The prophets spoke of the Messiah. They said he was at the sending of Abraham. They said he was of the line of David. They talked about him being Emmanuel. They declared him the Son of God.

[25 : 35] They spoke about his crucifixion. They said he would be pierced. They said, they said, they said. There's many Old Testament prophecies that point towards Jesus and these prophecies are made more certain because they come from the Spirit and because they've been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

So much so that he, as I've said often here in the last few weeks, he is declared, he is the word in fleshed. So the word of the prophets is incarnated in Jesus, is in fleshed in Jesus and we recognize and see that they point to Jesus.

God points to Jesus. This is my son, my love. Peter's pointing to Jesus and he's saying pay attention to Jesus.

All good preachers will be pointing to Jesus Christ. All good Christians will live for and be indwelt by the Spirit of God who will enable them to live lives that reflect and point to Jesus.

That's the great hope of the gospel for us. Why is it so important? Why do we pay attention to it?

[26 : 58] Why do we not forget? Because he says pay attention to it because it is like a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart.

So Jesus Christ and salvation and the gospel is the light of God, the life of God, the hope of God, the answer from God, the rescue from God.

They say that Venus is the morning star and it's called the morning star because the sun shines on Venus just before our dawn and it's the light before the dawn.

It's a reminder to us that the dawn is coming and it's the assurance that the dawn is coming and it is rising and will rise.

Now we live in difficult days. We live in dark days. We've always, gospel has always been in dark days and there's darkness in our hearts and ignorance and sin and Christ is our Redeemer and Christ's Holy Spirit is in our hearts and we are to live as messengers of a dawn that is yet to come.

[28 : 30] We are to be the light before the dawn. We are to be the morning star. We are to show this world because of what Jesus has done that there is more to life than this life.

There is a day of reckoning. There is a heaven to long for and there's a hell to shun and that this life isn't all that there is that we are to be the morning stars that reveal Jesus to us in a spiritually dark world because we know that our own hearts have been moved from taken from spiritual darkness to light.

The gospel of Jesus is light. It's life. It is hope. It is a future. It is truth.

It is grace. And our lives are to glorify God and point people to a new dawn, to a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

Do you think your life is insignificant? Do you think it unimportant? Not so. In Christ we have this great privilege of being children who have the light of God, the morning star rising in our hearts.

[29 : 46] That means it's an ongoing work. We're to be glorifying Him more and more every day, all of us in our lives. And our task as leaders is to point people, point ourselves and point others to Jesus Christ and to His life to always be reminding ourselves not to forget.

And so we will often go back to that unsearchably bottomless treasure that is Christ and hope and so doing, recognize and learn new things.

But also give that imperative to you and to us to pay attention, pay attention to the word of God, this is my Son.

And to the word of the prophets made more certain because this is God's Son. And if you don't know Him, you're in spiritual darkness and you need to come to know Him, to escape great condemnation and just judgment and separation from Him.

To know Him is to love Him and to serve Him and invite you to consider Jesus Christ today. That's our heads in prayer. Father God, we thank you for your word.

[31 : 10] We thank you for its inexpressible truth. It's an inexpressible greatness for its unmatched depth and yet also its wonderful simplicity, with where babies can swim as can elephants, a place of simplicity and complexity.

But above all a place where Jesus is revealed as the living Savior, the living God. And we ask that we would not forget.

Lord please forgive us when we consciously choose to forget, when we block you out of our mind, out of our heart, where we pretend we don't know you, where we're embarrassed, where we're ashamed, where we don't infuse our lives with refreshing, with remembering, with recalling your truth.

When we don't spend time around your word imbibing that truth daily into our lives. God give us these practices, give us these expressions of putting into place the imperatives of grace.

And Lord help us to pay attention. So easy to drift, so easy to have our minds focused on other things that are not important, that are passing away, that will be here today, gone tomorrow.

[32 : 41] Lord help us to pay attention to these great eternal truths of God and to their sign, the voice of God through Jesus Christ and through the word as it reveals Jesus to us.

So help us we pray. Bless us and guide us in Jesus name. Amen.