

**"...reminding you always."**

**2 Peter 1:12-21**

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**2 Peter 1:12-21**

*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. 16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

Michael Carroll was a 19 year old part time garbage man in Swaffham, England, who in 2002 won the national lottery to the tune of nearly 10 million pounds. However, by 2010 Michael had returned to his job as a garbage collector...having burned through his fortune on new homes, drugs, parties, jewelry and cars. He had it all, and he lost it all. Maybe "lost" isn't really the right word.

We have all read the stories about the guy who crawled out of poverty and social adversity to find riches and fame. Yet how often we read later accounts of that same guy abusing others, wasting money on extravagant living and gratuitous toys...eventually losing their friends and family, running out of money, often ending ended up in jail or in treatment for addictions. They had it all, then it was gone.

It's easy to stand back and be critical of such folks. After all, they had it all and essentially threw it all away. We tend to take the high road and believe we would never do such a thing. Yet for those of us that are believers and live in faith, we know that the same story is played out spiritually around us every day. Ironically, it is often those who came the farthest...those who had been redeemed out of extreme crisis and the deepest depth of sin, that eventually "kick their church to the curb," rejecting those who were instrumental to their salvation and growth, and in many cases find they have become the dog who returned to its vomit or the washed pig who returns to the mud. (2 Peter 2:22) Somewhere and somehow they forgot. They forgot and lost it all.

All such stories are indictments on our tendency to forget. Isn't it amazing that we need to be repeatedly reminded of what our Savior has and is doing for us? Reminded of how blessed we are to live under His caring hands? What a commentary on the heart and tendencies of all of us! Of course Satan understands this perfectly and regularly incorporates such a grasp of the heart of man into his attack plan. After all, he is the master of the "long con" and as long as he eventually triumphs, he is just fine with letting us run for a time in Christian circles. It seems we are much like big game fish...Satan lets us run out for a time and gain momentum until he suddenly and violently pulls back to embed his hook and then reels us in!

The rest of us stand off to the side of such disastrous accident scenes with expressions of shock and awe. For it seems inconceivable, doesn't it, that people who have been rescued from the wrath of God, granted eternal salvation, and given a spiritual family that loves them despite all and any past transgressions, would ever forget the One who, at such great cost, brought it about. It seems impossible that the relationships that they had

experienced and the magnitude of benefit that others and their church had spoke into their lives, could be so seemingly easily sacrificed on the altar of self and wants.

The fact is, left to ourselves...we tend to forget. All that it takes is a moment of inattentiveness...a period of selfishness...a day of self-entitlement. And suddenly everything is gone. Years of relationship and memories trashed. That which was the sweetest of possessions became bitter in our mouths. With a Hollywood slow motion moment, the match is struck and dropped, and the village that is our lives is burned to the ground. Countless individuals have emphatically spoken those words to me: "Not me. I will never do that." But like Peter they were still eventually left weeping in regret or like Judas attempting to justify their actions. For they too had it all, and threw it all away. They forgot.

Someone once said that we "only know what we put into practice." If such is the truth, then there is a very real ability to continually fill our minds with scripture and doctrine, but never really embrace and digest that knowledge. Certainly we see such on the practical level within the greater Christian community. Those that have the inexplicable ability to sit in church week after week of their lives, yet out in the 'real world' such information never finds its way into their actually living. It all really doesn't matter unless such is "activated" in our day to day lives. Not just for a day or a week, but for our lifetimes.

Many of us even now...today... have a "price"...a "breaking point." An 'offer we could not refuse' for which we would walk away from all of this Jesus stuff...at least practically speaking. We know this because we have all seen it here! Those that "played ball" for years and eventually 'took a walk' and are out of the faith completely or at least effectively today. Thus knowing the same himself, Peter brings it all down to a truth you can hold in your hand; the truth that such a faith will never be found in a Sunday pew, but rather out "there" on the streets of reality during the week!

Knowing all of this...knowing our tendency to drift, Peter is herein trying to anchor the believer so he or she will weather the storms...endure the persecutions...resist the temptations of the flesh and the world. He is trying to get the believer successfully to the "finish line." I know and understand this angst very well. For both Peter and myself have and will continue to "remind them of these things" as long as we are "in this tent." In Peter's case, that would not be long. As we have already mentioned, this letter is Peter's last. We know that soon after he penned what we are reading, Peter was executed for being a believer and moreover a preacher of Jesus Christ. And there is never any guarantee for myself also that I will ever see the pulpit again in this life. So there is never an instance where I come to this place that I fail to seriously consider what I want...what I need, to say, to all of you in case this is my last shot.

Peter would spend his last days writing to the churches in Asia...writing to you and I. I wonder if our passion for Christ and those here in the body would illicit similar activity on our part? Would we seek to tell someone about Christ and his salvation, or would we be diligently working on our "bucket list?" Would we encourage others in that situation? Would we serve and love our brethren through our departure? Or would we focus on ourselves...our needs and our wants?

I wonder all of this because reading these letters leads us to believe that Peter seemed to know he wasn't going to be around much longer and he doesn't write wondering why he wasn't getting any visitors! He was more concerned about how he could bless others, ...what he could say to encourage them and how he could pray for them. That's not how many of us grow old or how we finish! We frankly become that proverbial "old wineskins" that will no longer endure new wine without "exploding" when that wine begins to ferment, to "settle into" its surroundings! That is a sad thing to witness by the way...when someone who should be a spiritual patriarch in the body of Christ is in fact ending in spiritual diapers.

Peter had been given his ticket home, but he still had one more chance to preach, and "preach it" he was going to do! It was apparently important for him to leave a legacy. He wanted his work to continue to speak the truth long after he was gone. Note also here that the word "decease" means literally "exodus." Peter was not dying, *he was leaving*.

Peter, in verse 16, seems to want everyone to understand that what he had given his life to was not merely a belief or even his "religion." What Peter had dedicated his life to was fact...He knew it, because he had been **there**. He saw it...he witnessed the truth! He was there for the miraculous... he was "present company" when it all went down! This is such an important issue within the greater body of believers today! Because the fact is,

there is a vast difference between those who have *seen* the acts of God, like the children of Israel of the wandering age, and those who *witnessed the ways of God*, as did their leader Moses. Psalms 103:7 tells us that God “...*made known His ways to Moses, (but only) His acts to the children of Israel.*” Today there are some who have come to believe of the God of religion and church, and some who have witnessed the God of the miraculous and power. Peter was in that second category.

He had seen Christ “transfigured” up on that mountain. He had touched the nail-scars in his hands. He saw the blind restored of sight, the lame walk again, 5000 fed from a few loaves and fishes. He has seen the dead come back alive at the touch of Christ. Peter had witnessed the crucifixion ... saw his dead body, and yet saw Him back alive again. He had walked with Jesus personally. After 3 years, he knew Him intimately. Peter was no novice. He was there. He saw it all. He was *part of it* all. It wasn’t a dream and it was more than a news report. All that were there with Him in those days were so certain of what they witnessed that every one of them except perhaps John, died martyrs’ deaths. All gave their lives without recanting...without backing down. All of them horribly executed, and nobody broke rank. Nobody ran. Nobody quit. Nobody forgot. Why? Because *they were there. They were in it.*

Herein lies the great burning difference between many ‘church-going’ folks! This is the difference between the *believers* and the “*knowers*.” Those who have been *told* of his majesty, and those *who have experienced it*. Those that believe what they hear in church, and those who engage the evidence and have come to know experientially the truth of Jesus for themselves! Those that have heard about Jesus, and those that have seen his work...literally witnessed his power, His grace, and His sovereignty! This will always and forever be the vast divide within the greater body of Christ, and frankly why some will finish with a bang, and others in their end will fade into a whimper. There will always be those who know *of* Jesus, and those who actually *know Jesus!*

Peter is simply saying that if we do indeed believe, then let us live that belief. Because while knowing of Jesus is a great truth, Jesus is to be lived, not just acknowledged. Peter says in verse 20, “knowing this...” And that word is once again the “gnosko” knowing...the knowledge that comes only through experience. So unless I do indeed “experience” Christ first hand in my life...in HIS plan and work here on this planet, then I will never “know” what this passage says I must know.

In this case, it is the fact that God’s Word is not ever to be made to reflect one man’s understanding or agenda. Peter’s insight on this issue is staggering, because such a concept is a blight upon the greater church world today! The practice of torturing the text to get it to say what we want it to say. So what is the opposite of “private interpretation?” That would be “public and mass consensus.” A realm where proper and historical rules of biblical interpretation are practiced, ultimately allowing the scriptures to be their own commentary ...speaking into itself through agreement of scriptural parts, elements and aspects.

This is yet another reason why the church is important! Without the larger community and body life for each of us as believers, we not only cannot in truth live out the commands and demands of Christianity, but there is no place provided for consensus and agreement. It just becomes an “according to me” scenario and everyone knows how consistently on-the-money each one of our lives are without the fellowship of the saints and someone to critically speak into our lives!

We are today part of “fallen humanity.” Unless God literally intervened supernaturally into this world, we would never alone find our way. The fact is, the Bible *was and is* Holy Spirit inspired, and supernaturally recorded, according to God breathed communication. You may ask “but how do you know?” Well, firstly, there are certainly profound historical and foundational elements that are applied to that question and many books written...seminary courses given etc, that are vastly beyond my ability to present herein. But there are more basic reasoning’s also for simple folks like me! One, because the recipe for life herein presented actually works. It “bakes off.” There is nothing lacking, nothing missing, and it passes the test of viability and time. But you would have had to once again been experientially gnosko “out there” in order to know that! Not in a pew. But in His presence. Beside Him in His work. Present during His manifest. You have to have actually swam in water to really know what “wet” means and water feels like!

When someone chooses to dispute God’s voice as presented, Paul is willing to throw down concerning him, sentencing him to “anathema” or “accursed in the sight of God.” Galatians 1:8 “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*” These

folks have truthfully either never read this book in its totality, or read it void of Spiritual presence, or blindly deny the obvious grandeur found there.

Secondly, there are prophecies given and prophecies fulfilled in this book and “seconded” in secular history that are statistically “off the charts” in their probability. Approximately 2500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter—no errors. (The remaining 500 or so reach into the future and may be seen unfolding as days go by.) For example, the chance of just one person fulfilling eight specific Old Testament prophecies is calculated as 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power...or 1 in 100 quadrillion, and the odds of fulfilling 48 prophecies are estimated at 1 in 10 to the 157 power...

The writers, including our author Peter, penned the Scripture literally possessed by the Holy Spirit. They walked, lived, and served in the surety of a faith based on reality. Do we? Peter is giving his dying breathe to show us the way. The daring choice to follow is the road to “*all things that pertain to life and Godliness...*”

Peter was willing to stake his life and legacy on this Jesus and what He said and lived. We that have followed, have been willing to do the same, but in addition we now include that of Peter himself; HIS life and HIS testimony. And we that have done so, zealously desire today to add our own testimony to the heap of history. For we “*have not followed cunningly devised fables*” but have truly been “*eyewitnesses of His majesty.*”

One of the first signs of such a “slide” away is our unwillingness to forgive others. In our pride we forget that God in Christ has forgiven us, so we in our flesh fail to forgive others. We get depressed and angry, lose hope, become joyless and settle into a life of mediocrity. Another early sign is unthankfulness. We come to feel we deserve more than we have, or at least more than that “other guy” who isn’t nearly as committed to Christ as we are! So God kind of “owes us” really. Where is mine?

Jesus in John 6, after teaching some hard stuff, asked the twelve, “*Do you want to go away as well?*” Peter answered him, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed...and have come to know, ...that you are the Holy One of God.*” Peter believed first...but moreover he came to **know** that Jesus was the Messiah! Such was not accomplished through coming to church on Sunday mornings. It happened by actually engaging the gospel...by participating in the mission with Christ! It’s harder to forget something when it happens to you personally.

Are you truly today in such a position to actually experience the presence of God? To know him in such a way to secure a faith that transcends belief and becomes a knowing surety? For Peter, it was a reality beyond “belief.” And the only difference between him and all those who began this race and did not finish, was he actually **walked** with Jesus...he was there with Him. Others will never witness the hand of God or testify of his outpouring power or tell of His personal attributes and character because they may know of Him but are not **with** Him today! Because while God is indeed with you on your couch in your living room, His real presence and power is only manifested in His interaction with His children and the world they live in...the overflowing of His essence and the manifest of His divine plan. In other words, Jesus has always been where it was happening. And frankly, there are many of us that quite simply are not in that place because we just don’t want to be.

So many of us stumble and trip, rise and fall, throughout the whole of our relationship with God. All because we fail to heed to sign posts of direction as we travel. Many of us are satisfied with the hope of ultimately getting to heaven someday and someday. We believe we will be happy to just squeeze into the gates of eternity, satisfied to stand in the back, saying “well, at least I made it.” Yes, that’s true. But in that response we have failed to truly love the one who loved us without question. The reality is that many of us look at Christianity as merely a good defensive move so that we do not have to see hell. It has nothing to do with love, passion, thanks, commitment, and relationship.

**Psalms 143:5-6** *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. I spread out my hands to You; My soul longs for You like a thirsty land.*