KNOW IT, REMEMBER IT, LIVE IT!

2 Peter 1:12-21

This morning we’re continuing our study of Second Peter. Our passage this morning begins in verse 12 with the word, “Therefore.” The author, the Apostle Peter (1:1) is going to build on what he said in the first part of this chapter. So then, in order to move forward, it’s important that we recall what Peter said.

Who’s Peter writing to? To Christians, very possibly the same group he wrote to in First Peter, but he doesn’t say, so we’re not certain. But we know that whoever he’s writing to are believers in Jesus Christ (1:1, 1:9).

What’s Peter’s primary purpose for writing? To instruct believers in how to deal with false teachers. Now Peter talks about Christian character (“qualities” in v 8-9), having assurance of our salvation (v 10), and the second coming of Jesus Christ (v 16). But these are all sub-themes. They’re part of his larger discussion on dealing with false teachers.

Are we sufficient in Jesus Christ? As Christians, do we have everything we need for our salvation and for spiritual growth? Absolutely yes! V 3 “His [Christ’s] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life [eternal life, our salvation by grace thru faith] and godliness [living like Christ], thru the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence…”

What are some of the things that God has given to us for our salvation, for our growing to spiritual maturity? The Holy Spirit, the Word of God, a new nature, fellow believers, pastors and teachers, trials and testing, etc.

So then, given all these things, what is our responsibility as believers? Peter says, “Make every effort…” (v 5); “Be all the more diligent” (v 10). God obviously expects something of us. We must have some responsibility. We should discipline, commit ourselves to develop the qualities that Peter mentioned in v 5-7. So then, once we receive Christ, once we come to faith in Him then we are to grow in our faith to maturity…and when we get there, we are to keep growing.

Now, as Christians, do we have a choice to grow or not in our faith? Yes we do. It is evident from Peter’s words in v 9 that some believers lack these qualities – they are not growing into maturity but remain babies in Christ.

What is the danger of not growing, of becoming spiritually stagnant or not living the way that we should? We will not experience joy, we will lack the assurance of our salvation, and we will be unfruitful. That’s in this life. But then after we die we must stand before Jesus and give an account of ourselves, of what we did with what He gave us. There will be a day of reckoning when we give an account of ourselves. We want to be able to give our Master a good report. This is at the heart of what Peter is saying in v 10-11.

Therefore…READ 2 Peter 1:12

Three times from verses 12-15 Peter speaks about reminding these early believers about what he had previously told them – even though they already knew them and apparently were practicing them. So, why the reminder? Why the repetition? Peter knows that people, even believers, forget easily. Perhaps Peter is drawing from his own personal experience here. He recalls how he himself wavered in his faith. This led him to deny Jesus three times even though he had previously expressed confidence that he would never fail Jesus. So Peter says, “I intend always to remind you…” Peter sees it as his responsibility as an apostle and teacher to remind these believers of truth at every opportunity.

READ 2 Peter 1:13-15.

Peter believes that it won’t be much longer until he dies. He has only a short time to live, to be in his physical body and able to communicate with them. “Soon” he will be “putting off” his body. Clearly Peter feels his death is imminent. That phrase in v 14, “as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me” is a reference to the one-on-one conversation he had with Jesus soon after Jesus’ resurrection…

John 21:17-19: “He [speaking of Jesus] said to him [Peter] the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ and he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep. 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.’” And then John adds this statement in parenthesis as a commentary, to explain what Jesus meant: “This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.” John wrote this after Peter’s death, so it would have been clear to him what Jesus had told Peter. “And after saying this [Jesus] said to [Peter], ‘Follow me.’”

Tradition holds that Peter, when he came to the cross, said, “Since my Lord Jesus Christ, who came down from the heaven upon the earth, was raised upon the cross upright, and he has deigned to call to heaven me, who am of the earth, my cross ought to be fixed head down most, so as to direct my feet towards heaven; for I am not worthy to be crucified like my Lord.” Then having reversed the cross (upside down presumably), they nailed his feet up. (from *The Acts of Peter and Paul*, NT apocryphal writing after the 4th Century).

We don’t know if that’s really what happened. But this is the tradition that has been passed down. What we do know is that Peter was crucified, just like Jesus, on a Roman cross. And based on v 14 of our passage, Peter had been told this would happen to him by Jesus Himself some 30 years before.

“So,” Peter says, “while there’s still time, while I’m still here, I am going to keep reminding you of these things. That way after I am gone you will be able to remember what I said.” As it turned out, two of Peter’s letters, including this one (2 Peter), and the Gospel of Mark (which the church fathers held was Peter’s account of the life of Jesus as told to Mark) made it into the canon of scripture and 20 centuries later we are able to read and study the things that Peter wrote down.

READ 2 Peter 1:16-18

Peter is countering one of the false teachings of his day, that the apostles specifically (Peter, Paul, John, James, etc.) were being accused of concocting various tales and myths about Jesus for their own gain. Peter refutes that flat out. “We did not follow cleverly devised myths…” OK, then where did all this come from? Two main sources are identified. First, from their own eyewitness account (recall this was what marked an “apostle.” Second, from divine revelation.

Peter says that “we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He is referring to the second coming of Jesus Christ here. False teachers were disputing that Jesus was coming back. We know this from Chapter 3… READ 2 Peter 3:3-4. So Peter and the other apostles taught that Jesus WAS coming again in power and glory. How could they be so sure of this? Well, first of all, v 16, we witnessed Jesus in His majesty, which Peter will expound on further in the next verses. We saw Jesus in the majesty and splendor that He will be in at His second coming. When did that occur. In verses 17-18 Peter tells us. He describes and event that he was an eyewitness to. READ Matthew 16:27-28. Jesus tells his disciples that one day he will come from heaven with his angels in the glory of His Father and that some of them, before they die, will see Jesus in His kingdom glory. READ Matthew 17:1-9.

So then, in v 16 when Peter says that “we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” He is talking about the event recorded in Matthew 17 when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. This is what he describes in 2 Peter 1:17-18.

[Turn slide]

But it is not only because we witnessed our Lord in all of His majestic glory, but we have all of the O.T. prophecies which point toward His second coming. V 19 “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention…” There were many prophecies concerning the coming Messiah [analogy about seeing mountains off in the distance which appear to be the same distance but one is in front of the other]. Jesus Himself spoke about His second coming. So we have the personal experience of seeing Jesus in all His divine glory as well as the prophetic word – from the O.T. and from Jesus.

READ 2 Peter 1:19-21

Pay attention to the prophetic word “as to a lamp shining in a dark place.” This lamp is the light of the word of God, God’s revelation of Himself to us. Psalm 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” How long do we do all this? “Until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” Until Jesus returns. When the light of the morning bursts forth we don’t need the lamp any more.

Verse 20 is very often misinterpreted. Please notice that there is a comma between verses 19 and 20. So, v 20 goes along with v 19. We have the prophetic word (from the O.T. prophets and from Jesus) which we need to pay attention to until He returns, knowing that no prophecy of scripture (still speaking about the prophetic word) comes from someone’s own interpretation. That Greek word for “interpretation” is *epilusis* (EP-ee-loose-is) and it is found only here in this verse and nowhere else in the Bible. This is always problematic because it makes it more difficult to determine the precise meaning of the word. I did a paper on the meaning of this verse while I was at DTS. I won’t bore you with all the details of what I learned, but suffice it to say this word has a whole bunch of possible meanings...release, an interpretation, unloosing, unfolding, solution, spell and explanation. To simplify matters let me try to explain it this way – the original writers of scripture did not make up their own messages. Their words were not based on their own theological interpretation or ideas or personal opinions. Here Peter is talking about the origination of scripture. And the next verse, v 21 he makes this quite clear. “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man…” Scripture does not have a human origin – it did not come from man’s own thinking. A human writer? Yes. God’s human instruments? Yes. But the words that they spoke and wrote down did not come from the mind of man. “…but men spoke from God…” It is the word of God. “…as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” God gave the prophets His message thru the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All scripture is breathed out by God [that is what inspiration means] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

The Holy Spirit is the divine author and originator of all Scripture. It is worth noting that in the O.T. alone, the human writers refer to their writings as the words of God some 3,800 times.

So apparently some false teachers claimed that the apostles were just making things up and that their messages were not really from God. By the way, these same voices are still among us and sadly, some of them have permeated within our churches.

Application: What is the primary standard for your life? What is most influential in formulating your opinions, prioritizing your values, setting the course for your life? There are many voices out there trying to influence you. Is it your own personal desires? the opinions of people? Public policy? or is it what God says and thinks?