

*Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught.<sup>13</sup> And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live.<sup>14</sup> For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life,<sup>15</sup> so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone.* 2 Peter 1:12-15 NLT

This epistle was Peter's final words that he would share on paper with the early church. (Providing you believe this epistle was written by Peter. Not everyone agrees with that) Final words are often meant to communicate things of great importance. Parents give final words of advice; Bosses give final instructions before leaving for vacation; Commencement speakers give final words of wisdom.

An intersecting study can be done on the last words of great Christians.

The key to today's sermon is to "remember." Last week we talked about how important it was to "know" God. Today we will find that Peter's words are intended to remind his readers of the things he believes are most important. He wants them and us to not forget what he had to say.

Peter not only wants them to remember what he has just talked about with his verbal linked chain of Christian qualities but he wants them to remember what he taught them about Christ's message long after he is gone from this earth.

Why is it so important that we remember? Someone wrote the following thoughts:

"I was headed home late from a wedding reception and had about a two hour drive when a friend said to me, "Remember that for every mile you drive there are two miles of ditch".

I was in the car before that really sunk in, and then it hit me, for every path we walk, there are two miles of ditch along the journey inviting us to veer off the road. Twice as many chances to stray away from God. Few of us intend to go into the ditch. No one just drives down the road and says "Hey I'm going to drive into the ditch" or appropriately (like Peter) "I'm going back to fishing". For most of us, it is a simple hugging of the shoulder and little by little we move ourselves from the path of following Jesus and somehow we end up off the road and in the ditch." Remembering is important.

So with all this in mind, let's continue to look at this final message that Peter was stressing to the early followers of Christ.

### **1. A practical reminder:            There will be times of sifting**

*Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught.* 2 Peter 2:12 NLT

Remember that Peter is writing from his own experience. While he concedes that these Christians are standing firm he also knows that everyone is vulnerable at times to be sifted. He knows this first hand because he heard this warning himself from Jesus at the last supper.

<sup>31</sup> “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.” <sup>33</sup> Peter said, “Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you.”

<sup>34</sup> But Jesus said, “Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.” Luke 22:31-34 NLT

### **Sifted:**

Sifting or sifted is an interesting word and not one that we think of often. I don't want to get hung up here but all of us will be sifted at times in our lives. What does it mean?

1. to separate and retain the coarse parts of (flour, ashes, etc.) with a sieve.
2. to scatter or sprinkle through or by means of a sieve: *to sift sugar onto cake*.
3. to separate by or as if by a sieve.
4. to examine closely: *The detectives are still sifting the evidence*.
5. to question closely.

Being sifted spiritually means:

1. Accelerated spiritual growth in times of trouble.
2. Increased trust in God and surrender to His sovereignty.
3. Refined and cultivated seed for increased fruitfulness and multiplication.
4. The seemingly painful process through which every child of God has or will face trials that result in being broken and refined, strengthened and restored, and grown and empowered for God's glory and Kingdom expansion.

In verse 10 of Peter's letter that we are studying he had mentioned that adding Christian qualities to your faith will keep you from falling. Let me remind you again that we are to supplement our faith with virtue followed by knowledge followed by self-control, patient endurance, godliness, brotherly affection and love.

All of these things will help keep us grounded in times of sifting.

Peter felt an urgency to help Christians remember. In the KJV it is worded like this:

*“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth.”*

There is an urgency that we should pay attention to if we want to be faithful and authentic Christians.

Pay attention to your spiritual walk. You should be growing daily in your walk and in knowing God. Peter was intent about making sure they remembered and stayed vigilant. So he presses on a little closer after acknowledging that for now they seem to be “standing firm in the faith they have been taught.”

## **2. A “preaching” reminder: We all need to be stirred up!**

*And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. 2 Peter 1:13 NLT*

We all need to be “preached at” at times. It is the prophetic preaching of faithful men and women that stir up our faith. It is submitting to the teaching and direction of the Holy Spirit as He teaches us and helps us remember what Jesus taught while He was on this earth.

Peter wasn’t looking for something new or dynamic to teach. Unlike many “spiritual teachers” today who seem to be always looking for or chasing something new, Peter was stirring them up with a reminder of the plain old gospel message. Those in the early church were bombarded with new teachings and doctrine cut loose from the moral and ethical standards of Jesus Christ.

We will never outgrow this truth:

Jesus came to make substitution for sin and that this teaching, received by faith, makes demands on us to live upright, changed and holy lives.

A.W. Tozer wrote, "Revivals come only to those who want them badly enough. The problem is not to persuade God to fill us, but to want God sufficiently to permit him to do so. The average Christian is so cold and so contented with his wretched condition that there is no vacuum of desire into which the blessed Spirit can rush in satisfying fullness."

“The American gospel has evolved into a gospel of addition without subtraction. It is the belief that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behavior... A changed life is one that has added Christ and subtracted sin that attracts a world weary of worn-out words. Obedience is the proof.”

Recently I attempted to sound a call to be burdened for and to carry a burden for lost people who attend our church yet may not know how lost they are. I was perceived by some as being negative. It is negative. It’s not supposed to feel good. A burden is born out of feeling bad enough about something to do something about it. In the case of spiritual things it is not fixed or solved in a meeting it is solved by hours of prayer and intercession.

There is nothing more disquieting to me than the thought that we have people attending our church who really don’t know the first thing about being a Christian. And even with preaching and teaching intended to show the way and invite them to walk the walk many people are more content to just make it up as they go.

I have taken my campaign for revival and authentic discipleship underground and I intend to personally make a difference in people one or two at a time. I am trying to invest my time in

people who want to grow and want to lead others to truly follow Jesus Christ. In the meantime, I have fallen on my knees and asked God to lead me to find people who want to see lives changed and transformed.

Sam Jones was a preacher who held revival services in the late 1800's, which he called "quittin' meetings." His preaching was directed primarily to Christians, and he urged them to give up the sinful practices in their lives. Sam's messages were very effective, and many people promised to quit swearing, drinking, smoking, lying, gossiping, or anything else that was displeasing to the Lord. On one occasion Jones asked a woman, "Just what is it that you're quittin'?" She replied, "I'm guilty of *not* doing something -- and I'm going to quit doing that too!" Even though she had no bad habits to give up, she wasn't actively living to please God.

I feel as though I have spent the last 12.5 years of my life calling and calling and calling for us to live as close to Christ as we possibly can. I have come to the conclusion that if it happens it will happen because of the Holy Spirit moving on hearts and calling them to pray and intercede and stay there till He really begins to move among us.

The most dangerous position to be in is to be in a church that has grown and continues to grow and we preach and teach and sing to lots of people every week and somewhere in our minds we buy into the fact that we are really doing something because of how many people are coming through our doors. Yes healthy churches will grow but they will grow in depth and not just width. Unhealthy churches can grow and just attract a large crowd for a variety of reasons that make no difference in the lives of the people daily.

WE NEED to be STIRRED UP.

I call for those of you that care to join me by praying like you have never prayed before. You can do it at home. You can come to our Williams Street location and pray. . . every Wednesday from 1130 to 1. And you know what? If enough people came and wanted to pray longer we would keep it open all afternoon. I long for someone to rise up and say, "Let me start a prayer meeting in the morning or evening so that more people can come even before or after work."

There is a quote from the business world that says: *Every business organization should have a vice president in charge of constant renewal.* How much more should we stop and take an inventory of our spiritual condition on a regular basis and pledge ourselves once again to God, body, spirit, mind and soul?

There are times as a pastor and spiritual leader that I wish I could just get in your face and call you out. Of course you have to be careful about that.

A man was stumbling through the woods, totally drunk, when he came upon a preacher baptizing people in the river. He proceeded to walk into the water and bumped into the preacher. The preacher turned around and, though almost overcome by the smell of alcohol, asked the drunk, "Are you ready to find Jesus?" The Drunk answered, "Yes, I am." So the preacher grabbed the drunk and dunked him in the water. Then he pulled him up and asked him, "Brother have you found Jesus?"

The drunk replied, "No, I haven't found Jesus." The preacher, shocked at the answer, dunked him into the water again, for a little longer. Then again, he pulled him out and asked, "Have you found Jesus my brother?" The drunk again answered, "No, I haven't found Jesus." By this time the preacher was at his wits end so he submerged the drunk once more, and held him down for about 30 seconds until he began kicking his arms and legs, whereupon he pulled him up.

The preacher again asked the drunk, "For the love of God have you found Jesus?" The drunk wiped his eyes and caught his breath and finally said to the preacher,

"Are you sure this is where he fell in?"

There is a better way to find Jesus that I want to tell you about today.

If you seek Him with all your heart you will find Him. You can have as much of God as you want.

Peter says we can be strong and stabilized in our faith. No more floundering around and faking it but we can remember what is important and live it out.

### **3. A perfect recall: We can be strong and stabilized**

*<sup>14</sup> For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, <sup>15</sup> so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone. 2 Peter 1:14-15 NLT*

When we remember things that are important in our lives we are much better off for it. We will be strong and stable in our faith walk.

What we want to develop in ourselves as Christians should be a perfect recall. In our moments of weakness and or temptation we should remember the word of God, the promises of God and the faith we have professed.

Remembering is so important at many levels. In Revelation, God is talking to seven different churches about their needs. It is interesting to me that while the people of God in the Bible often were called to repentance and to turn back to God, (implying they had drifted away), many churches and people today would never want to admit a need. They will do anything to cover and ignore their weaknesses. Sometimes it can be downright comical or at least it is better to laugh than to cry.

It is not always funny and in Revelation 3 God is getting down to business with a church:

*"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup> Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God! <sup>3</sup> Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Revelation 3:1-3 NLT*

If God were doing a little inventory of your spiritual life or mine I wonder what He would say. I wonder if there are some things we should repent of and lay down for His sake.

Peter is calling us out to make every effort to remember what God has done for us and to be in love with Jesus Christ so much that our lives are transformed beyond what we can do on our own.

The renewal of our nature is a work of great importance. It is not to be done in a day. We have not only a new house to build up, but an old one to pull down. — George Whitefield

Shortly before his death, the legendary film producer Cecil B DeMille wrote this beautiful meditation:

"One day as I was lying in a canoe, a big black beetle came out of the water and climbed up into the canoe. I watched it idly for some time. Under the heat of the sun, the beetle proceeded to die. Then a strange thing happened. His glistening black shell cracked all the way down his back. Out of it came a shapeless mass, quickly transformed into beautiful, brilliantly colored life. As I watched in fascination, there gradually unfolded iridescent wings from which the sunlight flashed a thousand colors. The wings spread wide, as if in worship of the sun. The blue-green body took shape. Before my eyes had occurred a metamorphosis--the transformation of a hideous beetle into a gorgeous dragonfly, which started dipping and soaring over the water. But the body it had left behind still clung to my canoe."

"I had witnessed what seemed to me a miracle. Out of the mud had come a beautiful new life. And the thought came to me, that if the Creator works such wonders with the lowliest of creatures, what may not be in store for the human spirit?"

Are you alive today spiritually? Really let's be honest. Do you feel some hunger to be closer to God? We are about to enter another fall of the year. For some it is a time of transition back to school or a new quarter of work, or maybe it is just the end of summer but it could be when you get serious about God like you have never been before.

On the Easter just before he died, D. William Sangster painfully printed a short note to his daughter. A deeply spiritual Methodist, he had been spearheading a renewal movement in the British Isles after World War II. Then his ministry, except for prayer, was ended by a disease which progressively paralyzed his body, even his vocal cords. But the last Resurrection Sunday he spent on earth, still able to move his fingers, he wrote: "How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' Far worse, to have a voice and not want to shout."

Has the Son risen in your life? Can you remember today when He came in to your life and heart? If not or if you are a long ways away from those days I want to invite you to pray today before you leave this place.