

LESSON 13

Our Source for Growth

THE INSPIRED WORD

Peter ends his epistle with the encouragement to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18). He began his epistle with excellent reasons for the pursuit of such growth: all things that pertain to life and godliness are offered in the knowledge of Jesus (1:3), exceedingly great and precious promises are given in the knowledge of Jesus (1:4), and through the knowledge of Jesus we can partake in the divine nature (1:4). The list of virtues Peter gives for the Christian to diligently add to his faith represent the full knowledge in which he has encouraged growth (1:5-8). He has shown that the one who diligently grows will be given an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom (1:11). He then gives attention to his own urgent effort to aid them in their growth (1:12-15) and offers support for the authenticity and efficacy of the word of which he reminds them (1:16-21).

THE GRACE GOD OFFERS IS IN HIS WORD, AND IT WOULD LEAD US TO A DRAMATICALLY TRANSFORMED LIFE FILLED WITH HOPE IF WE BUT LET IT.

There is no replacement for the word of God (cf. Luke 16:27-31). If we believe it is inspired of God (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16), is living and powerful (cf. Hebrews 4:12), and the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever (cf. 1 Peter 1:23-25) then we will come to it daily (cf. Psalm 1:2). The grace God offers is in His word, and it would lead

us to a dramatically transformed life filled with hope if we but let it (cf. Titus 2:11-15).

REMINDED AND STIRRED UP

“*For this reason*” – spiritual reminders are vital to the growth of Christians (vv. 5-7), their fruitfulness (v. 8), their transformation (v. 9), their stability in faith and hope (v. 10), and their realization of salvation (v. 11). It is not that the brethren were ignorant, or unfaithful (v. 12). However, though they knew the truth, Peter thought it would be negligent for him to not remind them of the truth. His life was nearing its end and he would not shirk his responsibility in this vital task. He thought it “*right*” to remind them. Reminders are proper, and needed, for even Jesus thought it right to remind His own apostles of things He had already taught them (cf. John 14:25-26). Paul said such reminders are safe (cf. Philippians 3:1). Reminding brethren of truth is so important that Peter took measures for them to be reminded even after his death (v. 15; cf. Jude 3; 2 Timothy 2:2).

There are many reasons why we need to be reminded of the truth:

1. **Forgetfulness** – Men are prone to forget. We have already seen in the context of this study what damage forgetfulness can cause (v. 9). Throughout scripture, warnings of forgetfulness are given, and measures are taken to prevent it. The Israelites were warned not to forget the Lord when they inhabited the Canaan land, lest they turn to serve idols instead (cf. Deuteronomy 6:10-15). To avoid such spiritual amnesia, the Lord instructed parents to teach their children (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25). The Hebrews had forgotten the exhortation of wisdom concerning the Lord's chastening, and how it is an expression of love for their benefit (cf. Hebrews 12:5-11). This forgetfulness was leading to their discouragement, and spiritual drifting. The false teachers Peter addressed had been influenced by a type of forgetfulness. They were faithful brethren at one time but had fallen away and were promoting error (2 Peter 2:20). They were scoffing at the promise of a universal judgment, acting as though the Lord's promise was slack. They claimed nothing had changed or would change, but willfully forgot about the universal judgment by a flood in Noah's day (cf. 2 Peter 3:3-7). The brethren needed to be reminded lest they fall into the same trap.
2. **Complacency** – Reminders are needed lest we get too comfortable in our current stage of faith. When God's word is constantly visited, and known truths are reemphasized, we can avoid the self-deception of thinking we have come far enough, or that we are above God's judgment. If I am consistently looking to Jesus, then I am consistently seeing something I can improve upon in my life (cf. Ephesians 4:13). The Corinthians had grown complacent, thinking they had already "made it" (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:8-13). This pride of complacency led to their tolerance of gross immorality which compromised their spiritual standing even further (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-8). The men of Judah were "*settled in complacency*" (Zephaniah 1:12). Their comfort in sin promoted by luxury and wealth would be disrupted by the prophesied judgment of the Lord (cf. Zephaniah 1:12-17). If they had simply given time to remember the righteous judgments God had displayed in the past, they would have been able to avoid the spirit of complacency, and the resulting destruction.
3. **Apathy** – Some stop caring about spiritual matters. They may still come to worship and bible study, but their minds always wander off, and life outside the walls of the church building lacks any hint of spiritual fervor. Spiritual reminders revive cares, concerns, and interests which once were abundant. Remember how gracious the Lord tasted (cf. 1 Peter 2:3)? Remember the joy of your initial forgiveness (cf. Acts 8:39)? Remember the confidence and zeal produced by knowing you received the true word of God (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16)? Remember the peace experienced by giving your cares to the Lord (cf. Philippians 4:6-7)? Jesus said He would vomit the apathetic, lukewarm disciples out of His mouth (cf. Revelation 3:15-16). Divine reminders keep us from apathy.
4. **False Teaching** – Ultimately, we need to be reminded lest we be persuaded by false doctrine. Paul had to remind the Galatians of the gospel they had originally received because they had entertained a false gospel (cf. Galatians 1:6-10). If we are in consistent

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remembrance of the truth, we will not be “*carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (Ephesians 4:14). Lest they be “*led away with the error of the wicked*” (2 Peter 3:17), Peter encouraged them to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (v. 18).

Remembrance is not for the pleasant experience of reminiscence, but for acting in accordance with God’s will. Peter wrote, “*Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you*” (2 Peter 3:13). “*Stir you up*” is the Greek word, *diegeirō*, meaning “wake up, arouse” (BDAG). When the disciples were amid the storm, and Jesus slept, they “*awoke (diegeirō) Him,*” “*then He arose (diegeirō) and rebuked the wind*” (Mark 4:38-39). They called Him to action. We must be reminded of the truth constantly because we are to be acting on the truth constantly.

THE ILLUMINATING WORD OF PROPHECY

What made the content of Peter’s reminders so weighty? Why should we trust in his call for us to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, or even trust in that knowledge given by the apostles in the first place? Why should we be so zealous about these writings, and so constant in our growth in them?

THE SCRIPTURE CAN BE TRUSTED. THE SCRIPTURE IS PROFITABLE. PETER TELLS US WHY.

The central theme of Peter’s second epistle is the return of Jesus in judgment and glory (cf. 2 Peter 3). Concerning this he noted, “*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:16). The information relayed by Peter and the other apostles were not

fabrications of men – “*fables.*” Its inception was not from cunning or pretense – “*cunningly devised.*” The truths espoused by the apostles, of which Peter reminded his readers, and in which he encouraged them to grow, were first conceived in the eternal mind of God (cf. Ephesians 3:9-11) and revealed through inspired men (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:2, 16). The scripture can be trusted. The scripture is profitable. Peter tells us why.

Eyewitness Testimony: Jesus chose men who would “*bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning*” (John 15:27; cf. Acts 1:21-22). The apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus, especially of His resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Eyewitness testimony is of the strongest evidence used in judicial contexts to establish truth. It is especially effective when there are multiple corroborative witnesses. Peter wrote, “*we...were eyewitnesses*” (2 Peter 1:16).

What reason would the brethren have to refuse the scoffing message of the false teachers who rejected the doctrine of Christ’s second advent? Peter, as well as James and John, were “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*” (v. 16). His reference is to the experience those three apostles had on the mount of transfiguration which foreshadowed the glory in which Christ would appear for the second time (cf. Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). The doctrine taught by Peter and the rest of the apostles about the “*power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:16) did not come from a fable they had been told but was testimony of the majestic splendor of Christ’s heavenly form which they had seen themselves. This glorious appearance of Christ for

the second and final time would be for the condemnation of the wicked, and reward for the faithful (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 5:1, 4). There was sufficient evidence for the brethren to believe it and prepare accordingly for that great day which would come as a thief in the night (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-18).

Inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *“And we have the word of prophecy made more sure”* (v. 19, ASV). *“More sure”* (ASV), or *“confirmed”* (NKJV) is the translation of the same word used in verse 10 concerning the need to *“make your call and election sure.”* It is the Greek word, *bebaios*, “of something that can be relied on not to cause disappointment, reliable” (BDAG). Peter is not minimizing the weight of the eyewitness testimony he just spoke of but is giving ample proof of the content of his preaching. In fact, his testimony as an apostle is on equal plane with that of the inspired prophets (cf. 2 Peter 3:2; John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:5-15). What he made known concerning the power and coming of the Lord was prophesied long before by the men God used to reveal the Old Testament (cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12). They would do well to heed it, and to grow in it, as it would make them wise for salvation (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15).

The *“prophetic word”* would act as the instrument to eradicate the darkness of error or doubt in the hearts of those who would search it in honesty. It is a *“light that shines in a dark place”* (v. 19; cf. Psalm 119:105; John 1:1, 4-5, 9). In the theme of diligence in growth, Peter added, *“you do well to heed [the prophetic word]...until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”* (v. 19). They needed to study the scripture until the light of truth was established within them. *“The morning star”* is used to refer to Jesus in other places (cf. Revelation 3:28; 22:16). Peter had encouraged them to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, and by doing so to partake in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:1-8). Christ would be living in them through such knowledge obtained in the scriptures (cf. Galatians 2:20; Romans 10:17). The morning star would rise in their hearts and vanquish the darkness of the false teachers (cf. 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:17-18).

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Lastly, Peter noted the ultimate reason to invest our time and energy in study of scripture, and to trust its efficacy. Scripture does not originate with man (v. 20). The men who wrote scripture were merely used as the pen of the Holy Spirit (v. 21). *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God”* (2 Timothy 3:16). We would all do well to heed it.

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LESSON 13 QUESTIONS

1. What efforts does Peter make toward the growth of his readers? (cf. 2 Peter 1:12-15)
2. Why should a Christian come to God's word daily?
3. Describe Peter's perspective on the need for reminders. What other scriptures show the importance of being reminded?
4. What four reasons are given in the lesson for needing to be reminded? What other reasons could be given?
5. What are some examples of forgetfulness in scripture?
6. Explain how reminders could help us avoid complacency.
7. Explain how reminders could help us avoid apathy.
8. What does Peter say was his intention in reminding the brethren? (v. 13)
9. Of what was Peter an eyewitness, and what did it have to do with the content of his epistle? (vv. 16-18)
10. Explain inspiration according to Peter. (vv. 19-21)