

How to Remember

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[0 : 0 0] But, we're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, and we've been in 1 Peter the last little while, but this morning we're going to be dipping into Peter's second letter, 2 Peter chapter 1. You'll find that on page 1018, if you have one of the church Bibles.

And Dick is going to be preaching to us from the second part of this chapter, but we'll read the whole of 2 Peter chapter 1 so that we get the flow of Peter's words.

2 Peter chapter 1, then, at verse 1. Simeon, or Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

[1 : 3 6] For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so near-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.

For in this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

I think it right as long as I'm in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

[3 : 0 3] And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son with whom I'm well pleased, we ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven.

For we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

May God bless us this His Word. Well, my good friends of the Tron, it's always a very happy thing to be with this congregation on a Sunday morning.

[4 : 46] I thank God for you, and so do many Christians down south in London where I live. We're glad to hear of you, and we are thankful for your witness.

Well, let's turn again to the unchanging Word of the everlasting God, and it is, as Willie has said, in 2 Peter chapter 1. My aim this morning is a very simple one.

It may seem to you to be too simple. I want to get clear once and for all. There's a boom. Is that me speaking twice? I'll speak.

Am I booming? I'll try not to. I know it's very irritating to be boomed at. My aim and hope this morning is to get clear once and for all what, according to Holy Scripture, remembrance is all about.

You may have noticed, as it was read, some rather intriguing things in our reading in the first few verses of the second half, verses 12 to 15.

[6 : 01] Here, Peter the Apostle is desperately anxious to remind certain churches and the believers of things they know perfectly well already. Notice in verse 12, I always intend to remind you.

Then in verse 13, as long as I'm in this body, to stir up your minds by way of reminder. And then in verse 15, I'll make ever effort so after my departure, apparently he knows his time is short, you may be able at any time to remember, to recall.

And yet, if you look at verse 12, we're told that these Christians are firmly established in the truth and know all about the matters that Peter is talking about, so they don't need reminding at all.

So the question is, why is Peter so anxious to remind them of things they know perfectly well already? There's something about remembrance that's peculiarly important, and today, obviously, is a suitable time to find it out.

It may seem slightly weird to you, but I rediscovered the meaning of remembrance in a dreadful traffic jam some years ago. We were completely stuck with cars stretched up ahead and behind for miles with no hope of ever moving again.

[7 : 30] So I settled down to read whatever was in the glove compartment of the car. It was a Bible. I opened it and read Isaiah 51.12. Now, you may like to turn it up.

There's no need because I'm going to read it, but if you'd like to follow me in turning it up, by all means, do. Isaiah 51.12. I had been fuming in the traffic jam, but I came to rest and rejoiced in this remarkable word.

Isaiah 51.12. I am he who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies? Of the son of man is made like grass.

And have forgotten the Lord, your maker, who stretched out the heavens, laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor.

So here is little Israel, surrounded by its enemies and naturally terrified. They may not have had suicide bombers, but I can assure you that the Assyrians were, in their prime, terrifying people.

[8 : 41] And as they tremble, God says to them through the prophet Isaiah, I see you've forgotten me. And little Israel says, well, we of all the nations in the world can't forget you.

We know that you're our creator. They may not know in heathen Assyria, but we know. To which God gently replies to them, but if you are terrified of your enemy, you have forgotten me.

Now do you see the point? These people knew the truth about God. They grasped that truth that God was a mighty God long ago, but the truth that God was a mighty God who promised to protect them had not grasped them.

It was as though in the face of deep trouble, they had no God of grace and power to depend on. In other words, they were trembling like people who had no God.

They had forgotten. This fear then speaks of forgetfulness. Forgetfulness that God has, the God who promised to be their help and strength, was no longer there.

[9 : 53] It was a practical remembrance that had gone. So you see, the Bible idea of remembrance is a very dynamic concept.

What it does is to connect us with the past so that we behave rightly and think rightly in the present. Let me give you an illustration.

Today we're remembering two world wars and indeed wars in between and still now. And it's very important, obviously, that we should do so. And it was good to see many people hurrying to George Square as well and I'm sure in churches all over the country.

But it needs to be a dynamic remembrance. Let me tell you something about next year and the remembering of the First World War. 2014, a hundred years after the war broke out in 1914.

No one will be able to forget the First World War next year. Indeed, we may get a little tired of constant reminder. It will climax in a great service at Glasgow Cathedral in August.

[11 : 06] It is reported that the publishers propose to bring out about a thousand books on the First World War by the time they've finished. A thousand. They've already started.

There will be hundreds of school trips to the battlefields all next year. So you parents of teenagers, you better start saving up now because you've got to pay for them. The Imperial War Museum, which is just along the road from where I live, is re-changing one or two whole floors, so that you can't get into part of it at the moment, which will open in February.

Anyway, when they do an exhibition like this, it's always marvelously done. So when you go to the Imperial War Museum, and it'll be worth going down to see it, I guess, after February, you'll see the mud, see about the casualties.

You'll have discussions as to whether the generals knew their stuff or whether they were donkeys. You will hear about the war poets and the VCs and all sorts of things will be in that exhibition.

It's interesting, isn't it, that the country feels it worthwhile to spend a whole year in remembrance of that great war, that terrifying and terrible war. I have two little pictures of home of old-fashioned ambulances.

[12 : 31] I don't know how they ever worked. Since my mother, when she was 18, was an ambulance driver in 1914, when I first learned to drive a car, she told me to double-declutch.

Do any of you know what it means to double-declutch? Do you do? Well, of course, you don't need to do it in modern cars. I'm surprised those ambulances could work even with a double-declutch. I guess they needed a treble-declutch, whatever that means.

But here's the question. Do you really remember the wars, the First World War and the Second World War? I think with many people, it's just a sentiment. It may be a deep sentiment.

There may be deep sorrow. But there's nothing dynamic in their remembrance at all. If you have a biblical idea of remembrance, you will do something about it.

For example, you will seek for peace, just as those men are in Geneva at the moment, and I gather they've not yet succeeded. Is that right? Is that right? But those efforts are right, aren't they?

[13 : 36] That's remembering wars. Knowing we're in a world of war and terror, you seek peace. But you also prepare for war, and rumors of war, as Jesus warned us, you do something about it.

I've been very busy this week with the pastoral training course, but I picked up a daily paper from time to time, and I've been most interested to see several letters and one long article on why the government is allowing our forces to become so small.

And though I'm sure the writers are not particularly Christian, what they're saying is, don't you remember the kind of situation we were in between the two world wars when we failed to rearm so that we hardly had a spitfire to put in the air at the beginning of the Battle of Britain, and we'd just managed to get there in time.

We'd forgotten that the world is a nasty place and we have many enemies. Is it not the case that practical remembering means taking the past seriously and applying it to the present?

So perhaps somebody will be writing to their MPs saying, what is the government doing allowing our forces to become so weak, cutting out so many regiments? Wouldn't be much good writing to my MP.

[15 : 03] He's particularly wet and useless. But you may have a good one. Back then to Peter.

Now, due to what you read in chapter 2, 1 and 2, will you now just focus on that, a crisis has arisen.

Do you see in chapter 2, 1 and 2, false prophets arose among the people in the early days? Just say there will be false teachers among you today, says Peter, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them.

So they'd been Christians once upon a time, they'd belonged to the redeemed community, but now they denied what they originally believed, bringing upon themselves swift destruction and no doubt on others.

Many will follow their sensuality and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. So new teachers are arising with destructive teaching and the result is moral collapse.

[16 : 16] these church teachers, I take it, were making a very big impression. They had been loyal Christians, but now they denied the authority of Christ.

Apparently, they were undermining the faith of many people. And Peter says plainly that they were destroying the life, the peace, and the unity of the churches where they lived.

Where still, many were following, notice the many, not a few, many were following their teaching, were leaving the church the Christian morality that they had been taught for what Peter calls depravity or shameful ways.

And that brought the authentic faith into disrepute with people everywhere. Why? People could look at the church and say they're no different from us. This was particularly serious because as I understand it from this word secretly.

Do you see that in verse 1? What they were doing was subtle and insidious and you might not notice it at first. And because they were important people, you didn't like to say they must be wrong.

[17 : 30] The result of this false teaching within the churches was divisive. It brought the churches into collision with one another. they could no longer be united.

Second, it was devastating. It was corrupting a new generation of Christians who were growing up or rather people who were listening to the church and now because of this teaching were being corrupted.

And finally, it was destructive of church growth. The church became sterile, divisive, devastating, destructive. Now that's why Peter is so worked up.

That's why he's so alarmed. It seemed extraordinary that this false teaching and false living had spread so quickly in his time. And this is in the first century towards the end of it.

Very soon he would be gone. What is he to do? So it's in that crisis that he gives a very straightforward answer. He says, the believing Christians are never to let home, never to let go, never to forget always to remember.

[18 : 39] One, what is it in verse 16 to 18? Just glance at it. They're never to forget, never to let go of the apostolic teaching, which we would call the New Testament. And they're never to let go of the prophetic teaching.

We would call that the Old Testament, verses 19 to 21. Now, this is what, my friends, has been happening today.

And that is why live, faithful churches today are holding firm to the apostolic teaching and the prophetic word. That is, to the New Testament and the Old Testament.

And we do this on the Lord's Day, on Sunday. We remember what Jesus did for us on the cross, isn't that right?

And we remember what Jesus taught us for our benefit in this life and for eternity. We remember. Therefore, there are only two pieces of furniture we need in the church this end.

[19 : 46] We need a lectern on a pulpit, not for somebody to stand up and give us his opinion, but for someone to take us back to the word of God, the apostolic testimony and the prophetic word, to open the Bible and teach us from it.

In other words, the lectern is here to remember. To remember what they said in the past, what Jesus did for us in the past, and then to say to you, live differently now in the present.

Isn't that what we're doing? Every time we look at the Bible in church on Sunday? And the table, that's the only other piece of furniture we really need, and we have a table on which we put bread and wine, and we remember the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

And we determine not to deny him. We determine not to disobey him. We determine today to live in the light of what Christ did for us. We remember. It's very striking to me that every Sunday is in this vital sense a remembrance day.

We go back to the teaching of the Bible, we go back to the cross of Christ in order to reset our thinking now and to reset our living. That's what we're meant to be doing every time we meet together as a congregation on Sunday.

[21 : 07] In the light of hearing the Word of God, we want to do what Jesus told us to do, to search the Scriptures that bring us a knowledge of him.

Well, naturally, of course, the false teachers don't agree with that. And so it is the business of the new type of teaching, which is happening in Peter's day and is happening in ours, to decry the apostles and the prophets.

They may or they may not attack us personally or our churches, but they want to say that the apostles and the prophets are not really worth studying and living by because they're out of date.

So the faithful churches, as I say, are going back to the apostles and prophets and the false teachers are decrying the authority of the apostles and the prophets.

For example, with regard to the apostles in verses 16 to 18, I suppose, well, when I was at college, they told me that many of these stories of miracles of Christ, of course, never really happened because it was years later that these New Testament stories were written down and by that time everybody was in a muddle and they felt that by talking of miracles they could shore it all up.

[22 : 33] But notice what he says in verse 16, we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for we were eyewitnesses. Firsthand knowledge, firsthand witness.

Well, there's no time to go into that at depth and length. Now, that's one of the things we were studying last week. And then, what about the prophets?

Well, say the new teachers, they were, of course, very popular in their day but they were imprisoned in their times and in their culture and we really can't in the 21st century trust their interpretation of events.

We must make up our own minds. And I dare say there were people, don't you think, in the ancient days of the prophets who went up to Isaiah and said, that's just your interpretation, Isaiah, I'm sorry, I'm not going to listen to you.

Well, that did not happen. Look at verse 20. Knowing, first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. salvation. So, what did not happen was this.

[23 : 48] Isaiah did not come down to breakfast and find there the prophetess, his wife and his son, Maha Shalal Hashbaz, eating their cornflakes or whatever they did in those days.

He did not address Maha Shalal Hashbaz. I imagine he called him bears for short. You couldn't say Maha Shalal Hashbaz every time you spoke to him, could you? I imagine he said, so you see, if Isaiah made up his own mind about things, he would say something like this, bears, you know, I think the other prophets have got it all wrong.

I think they misunderstand the threat of the Syrians. And I've got an idea that it's rather like this, and then he tells bears what he thinks.

And his son bears replies, good on you, Dad, get writing. Now that did not happen. And why did it happen? Well, look at verse 21. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man.

Isaiah did never come down to breakfast and say, I've had a good idea. I've rethought what the other prophets said. No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were swept along by the Holy Spirit.

[25 : 09] And so you see, Peter is asserting there in verses 16 to 21 that we can rely on the apostolic testimony because it comes from men who were there who saw and heard the Lord.

And we can rely on the prophetic word because the prophets did not have ideas of their own which they put down on paper or preached to the people. They were swept along by the Holy Spirit in order to speak the word of God.

So the apostles tell us the word of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles and the prophets tell us the word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. I say like verse 19 and I'm going to address it to you.

We have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you, you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart.

That means we've got to study the scriptures and live by them until Christ returns and on that day we shall enjoy a perfect inward illumination.

[26 : 31] We shall know as we are known. Let's pray. Forgive us if we forget what we have learned.

Forgive us, Heavenly Father, even more if we deliberately forget what we have learned and all that we might live as we want to. Forgive us if we have deliberately put aside these great facts which can never be changed.

Forgive us if we have so often lived as though Christ has not died for us. And so we pray that what you have taught us, what you have done for us, may be the power, the truth that controls both how we think and how we live.

And above all this morning we thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ and that sacrifice. We think of those menace stones in the cemeteries all over Europe with the name of the soldier and then underneath the sign of the cross.

And we thank you that that makes all the difference. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen.