

2 Peter

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2 Peter 1:8-21

Vss. 8-11

- In verses 5-7 Peter had built a Ladder of Virtues. Now he urges his people to climb and keep climbing. You climb by being intentional about deepening your relationship with Jesus. The more you know Him, the more of His gifts and power you will experience.
- But our faith is a living thing – it is either thriving or dying. Faith is never just stagnant. In vs. 9 Peter says that if your faith is not growing, if you are not climbing the ladder, then there are negative things that will happen: 1) you grow blind or short-sighted because we lack the light that a close relationship with Christ brings; the word for short-sighted may also mean to shut your eyes, so here are people in the church who go through life with their eyes closed to Truth, usually an inconvenient Truth that they just don't want to see, because if they see then they will know and if they know, they will either have to change or willfully sin against Christ. 2) you get selectively forgetful; like a cheating spouse who conveniently forgets the vows made at the wedding, the one who is not growing in their faith will soon forget they have been baptized and their old sins, their old life, has all been “purified”, washed away.
- If this is where you are, then Peter advises you do a spiritual health check: “make sure about His calling and choosing you...”. Too many people join the church, but never join Jesus. They've been baptized, but they didn't get saved, they just got wet. They didn't sign up to follow Jesus to the Cross and surrender their life as a bond-slave of Christ. They just joined a religious group of people who seemed real nice. Such people are not saved. They are those Jesus refers to in the Sermon on the Mount: “Not everyone who says

to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father who is in Heaven will enter" (Matt. 7:21).

- This is what Peter has in mind it seems when he says, "for as long as you **practice** these things, you will never stumble." His Ladder of Virtues, the day to day practices of a growing Christian believer, are the keys to the certainty of your salvation. Not just saying you believe, "the demons also believe and shudder" (James 2:19), but growing in Christ as you DO the work of Christ, as you PRACTICE the things of Christ, which in turn cause you to then further GROW in Christ.

Vss. 12-15

- Here Peter is speaking like a pastor. He feels responsible to continually remind the church of the things which they should know and practice. Real learning always involves repetition, whether one is learning a new language, or a musical instrument, or mathematics, or Christianity. Michael Polanyi was a brilliant scientist at Manchester and Oxford as well as the University of Chicago. He argued that often we know things that we don't realize we know until they hit us in the face. He called it "tacit knowing". So the pastor teaches by repetition and by helping us unpack truth through tacit knowing, truth we knew all along but didn't realize, didn't grasp, until the pastor hit us in the face with it. There is the Divine Spark within all of us and as the pastor and the Holy Spirit work with us suddenly we know what we didn't realize before.
- Peter is motivated here in part due to his genuine concern for his people, but also because of how his own life may be cut short at any time. His death "is immanent". He speaks as Paul does in 2 Corinthians 5:4 of his body being "a tent", a mortal covering for his immortal soul.
- Surely here he is remembering the conversation with the Risen Lord John retains for us in John 21:18-19.
- Peter's goal here, like any parent or teacher who knows that the time of instruction is drawing to a quick close, is for his people to remember and practice the key points of the faith, the rungs of the Ladder of Virtues, long

after he is gone. He wants to see them in Heaven someday and he can't be there to shepherd them all the way in.

- The word in vs. 15 for “departure” is actually “**exodos**”. As Peter anticipates his death, he does not see himself going out into a nihilistic black nothing, but as one who is simply crossing into the new land Christ has promised.

Vss. 16-18

- The heart of Peter’s message is “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Peter wants there to be no question that the Son of God has come and is coming again. Remember, the heretical teaching he’s combating denies the Second Coming.
- Peter reminds them that unlike the heretics and pagan teachers of the mythical gods, he never came to them with “cleverly devised tales” of who God is and what He has done, is doing, and will do. He reminds them that he personally, along with others, were “**eyewitnesses** of His majesty.” Surely he is recalling that day on the Mount of Transfiguration with James and John, where in Matthew 17:1-6 (and Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) they **saw** Jesus brilliantly radiant with Moses and Elijah and the 3 disciples **heard** the voice of God say “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” Peter knows what he saw and heard and is fully confident in the Second Coming. If Moses and Elijah can reappear on earth, then certainly Jesus can return just as He said He would.

Vss. 19-21

- Vs. 19 is hard to translate from Greek to English. A good transliteration may be that in light of what Peter saw on the Mount of Transfiguration it “makes it certain that what was foretold in the prophets about Jesus as to His coming, His life, and His return on The day of The Lord must be all perfectly true.” Pagans and Jews alike in Peter’s time were consumed by prophecy. At the time of the birth of Jesus the Roman Empire was frantic with prophetic stories of the birth of an all-powerful king. Here then, Peter

is shoring up his eyewitness testimony by affirming how Christ is the total fulfillment of prophecy. So they all had better “pay attention” as they would be the only light in a dark room until Christ, the morning star, fills them completely with His own light.

- Then Peter makes a very strong statement, that no prophecy is a matter of human interpretation. The early church leaders and scholars took this to mean that when the prophets spoke, they were not merely expressing some opinion of their own, but were boldly sharing the revelation which God had given them. What Peter’s opponents were doing was taking scripture and twisting their interpretations to suit their agendas. (Some things it seems never change!)
- So how then ARE we to interpret and understand scripture? For as we saw in Revelation, taking everything at face value would be very confusing indeed! We should first ask, how did the writers and prophets of scripture get their message? The Holy Spirit of God was the source of the Old Testament writers and prophets. Only as we open scripture WITH the Holy Spirit are we able to rightly understand the message of the Holy Spirit through scripture’s writers, prophets, and preachers. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 that spiritual things can only be understood through the Spirit.
- Therefore, one should never approach the Bible as nothing more than just another ancient text, no different than Caesar’s journals or the works of Plato. Nor should one ever think that solely on their mental capacity can they know the deep truths of scripture. Peter insists that scripture is NOT the mere utterances and opinions of men but are the written words of the very heart of God. To understand then, we must sit with and be instructed by the very same Spirit who was there when the work was authored. He will teach us. This is why some of the greatest Bible teachers I have known have had very little formal education but have had an extensive education climbing the rungs of the Ladder of Virtues, growing closer and closer to Jesus with each rung, and being taught by the Holy Spirit of God Himself.