

2 Peter 1:12-15

Hope in the Fight

Always Remember These Things!



As humans we have a problem with our memories. It is one of the unique gifts that make us human. We remember things, often in detail. But most of us do not have a great deal of confidence in our memory. We are forever forgetting things! Where we put our glasses, or our keys, our important papers, and sometimes where we put our head!



When it comes to spiritual things, it gets even more difficult it seems! We memorize scripture, and in a week we are stumbling with recounting it perfectly. In 3 weeks we have to RE-memorize it, and then do it again and again to retain it! *15 years ago, I memorized Matthew chapters 5-7 – the Sermon on the Mount. I cannot even quote the beatitudes at this point! More seriously, we try to remember who we are in Christ, and how we should act or react in any given situation, but in the heat of the moment we seem to do anything but what we are supposed to do as Christ-followers. As they say, “we lost our head” and did and said unwise and inappropriate things - things we regret and are apologizing to God for almost as soon as the foolish deed is done or the rash words are spoken! It seems that the things that we remember from our way of life before we gave our hearts to Jesus so easily come to the forefront – so easily take over and dominate our minds and emotions, or actions and reactions! But the things *after* receiving Christ are not so easy to remember! We violate our contract with Christ like we don’t care,.. copping an attitude, losing our temper, but the fact is that we do care! We want to please Christ, but we know we continue to displease Him by saying and/or doing the very things that displease Him! Instead of asking forgiveness, we go defensive and justify ourselves.

So the Apostle Peter, knowing this common frailty in human beings - having experienced it himself on countless occasions, and having witnessed the failure of many a Christian in even the most basic aspects of being a Christ-follower,.. he tells his readers, then *and now*, that he considers it his job to remind us and keep reminding us of the most important elements of following Jesus! He has taught these things many times, and so have the other apostles, as well as the many pastors that they have trained in the essentials of the faith, training them so that they can teach the people of their churches and keep reminding them of the most important and most essential things!



In verse 12, Peter admits that his readers and listeners already know these things. He even expresses confidence that they are “*firmly established*” in the truth of these fundamental elements of what it means to be a Christian! These basics will never change. They are as ageless as God Himself! There is no controversy over it and all are in agreement about it. We are to incorporate the character of Jesus into our own character. It will include **faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, Godliness, brotherly kindness, gentleness, love, joy, peacefulness and peace-making, patience, generosity, wisdom, purity, hope, trusting and being trustworthy, mercy, forgiveness, contentment, humility, an encourager, considerate, stable, diligent/dedicated, responsible, thankful, sincere, reverent, honest, fruitful, teachable, tender-hearted, compassionate, unselfish**, and,.. well,.. I think you get the picture! This is the focus of the apostles teaching! You can follow this theme throughout the New Testament writings

The apostles taught the character of Jesus over and over again, everywhere they went. But it had trouble sticking! It goes against the grain of human nature, and human nature often dominated the nature of Christ and the influence of the Holy Spirit in Christians. It seems apparent that Peter spent a few years in Rome before his death, leading and influencing the Roman church. A terrible thing was happening in Judea, where the Jews were in the early process of rebelling once again against the Romans, and the Romans were pushing back. As little as just a couple of years from the time Peter wrote his two known epistles, the Jewish resistance would be crushed – ending with the leveling of Jerusalem, including the great temple, and the banishment of the Jews from their own land – they kicked them out! Talk about a refugee problem! The Jews would be disbursed to the four winds, settling everywhere in the known world – Europe, Asia, Northern Africa,.. and as they rolled into towns and cities everywhere, the Jewish Christ-followers sought out the local church. There weren't many local churches in one city at that time, so that you could choose the one with the great worship team or the pastor with the best communication skills. There was usually one church per city and that is where you joined up! The Jewish Christians brought their gifts and their energy and their enhanced knowledge of the Old Testament of the Bible into these various churches all over the western and eastern world. But, unfortunately they also brought with them an attitude. They found most of these churches were mainly gentiles, people who were, of course, indigenous to their various countries, and these churches had gentile leaders firmly in place. These pastors didn't have anywhere near the knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament as these Jews did. So it was hard for the Jews to respect their fellow Christians.



The attitude toward non-Jews back in Judea, was that they were some kind of lower form of life! In fact they were referred to as “goyim” or dogs! So as you can imagine, these Jews brought a very destructive intellectual and cultural attitude into these churches in gentile lands! They came in and thought they should be in charge and they expected the gentiles to just lay down and take it. It wouldn't work out that way obviously. Everywhere, the tension between Jews and gentiles in the churches was a problem. Thus, Peter kept reminding the two groups that as followers of Jesus they were expected to live, to act, react, speak in ways that were different from the way that most people would have in those circumstances. The Christian life was not about dominance but about harmony and unity! To get there, the fruit of the Spirit had to be well-polished with use by people on both sides of this racial and cultural divide. The people were often forgetting themselves and behaving with prejudice and favoritism, with enmity and disrespect! So Peter is determined to stay in their faces with the Fruit of the Spirit. *“Remember – this is ‘where the ‘rubber meets the road’ when it comes to faith. Remember! Don't you forget now! Always remember! Remember especially when you are irritated, fed up, angry, outraged!”* I can never forget that in my last church, we hosted three nights of special services where my brother did a wonderful job teaching on the love chapter – 1 Cor. 13. It was so encouraging and edifying. One week later, 3 of our most influential woman in the church came out of a prayer meeting together with an attitude about our new building program. They were certain God had told them the building and the direction of the church just had to go in a different direction. They employed their husbands and together they almost burned down the church! The attitudes became insufferable. The arrogance and scheming was a thing of great ugliness and darkness and divisiveness. It was hideous! And all this just after a beautiful seminar on agape love. A few made a decision to depart from the life of God and to embark on a campaign of darkness to get their way. It didn't work but what a mess they created – something the church did not recover from for 30 years. It is a good thing Peter was preaching this message over and over and over again, because with the fall of Jerusalem just a short time later, and the last dispersion of the Jews, Christian churches everywhere would be severely tested! Peter would not be there to help them work it through! He would be killed by the Roman emperor Nero in 69 AD, and Jerusalem would fall in 70 AD, and the last dispersion of the Jews came after that!



But Peter's faithful determination of relaying the teachings of Christ to the churches would certainly have helped the Christians on both sides conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to who they were in Christ! I would like to think that my emphasis of the apostles teaching has the same effect upon this church! This is the will of God for us, and who could possible argue against it?! It will take a lifetime of learning and growing and remembering and reminding each other to stay on track, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus! Because, when people are applying what they know of the will of God for them is, to their everyday lives the church truly is a reflection of the glory of God! So each one of us has to determine what our role will be in our church! Fruit of the Spirit, to encourage the church and help it meet its mission, or cooperate with the enemy of God and bring discouragement and disharmony! Watch yourselves!

[Gal. 6:4; 2 John 1:8; Acts 20:27,28]

