

Peter's Last Will and Testament (2 Peter 1:12-21)

Introduction:-

*The truth about life is that we often need "constant reminders" in order to keep us on track and focused about different issues, whether these be trivial or great. No doubt many of us have experienced loved ones or friends leaving us with little notes left on the sink bench top or table, reminding us about certain things that need our attention that we might just forget to do, even though we had already known about those things. And in our passage today, Peter's imminent death provides him with the opportunity to make sure that after his death, Christians **do not forget** the truth in which they currently stand. And in this way, Peter's last will and testament mirrors that of Paul's last will and testament to Timothy, found in the Book of 2 Timothy, where Paul is also concerned about false teachers and wandering from the truth (2 Timothy 4:1-8). Let us now look a little more closely at the passage before us.*

1. Firstly, we are confronted with Peter's Aim in writing (verses 12-15).

*Peter's main point in this section can be inferred from the frequency in which he underlines his responsibility in making sure that Christians **do not forget their basic message** which he has been giving them. The NIV translates the three tasks directed toward Christians, each starting with the same letter: **remind** (v. 12); **refresh your memory** (v.13); and **remember** (v.15). And this theme is set in a particular sequence of circumstances: First, Peter's life ("as long as I live", verse 13); then his death as "putting off the tent of this body" (v. 14; reflecting Paul at 2 Corinthians 5:1-8; with the words "made clear to me" probably referring to John 21:18-19); and finally what happens to the Christians who are still alive after "after my departure" (v.15). **They must not forget when Peter is gone from them.** Why is Peter so concerned about this issue of "forgetfulness"? Well, for one thing, amnesia is a common human problem. Even with reminders, we still tend to forget things! And the Old Testament is filled with stories of amnesia and failure. Take Moses' words at Deuteronomy 31:24-29, where Moses predicted that Israel would soon depart from following the Lord's commands, even though they had earlier vowed to keep the Word of the Lord at Deuteronomy 5:27-29. And to bring this ancient problem up to date, how many sermons from the past have we ever remembered, even though at the time of hearing them, we felt that we were genuinely fed and blessed? Well, what is Peter's solution to this problem? This is found in verse 15 which begins with the words, "And I will make every effort", reflecting Peter's challenge to his readers back at verse 10 - to see that after my "departure" (Greek - "exodus" used at Luke 9:31 of Jesus' impending death), you will always be able to remember these things. Peter achieves this through both the writing of 1 and 2 Peter, as well as through the Gospel of Mark, which tradition tells us, was Mark's recollection of Peter's sermons!! And so verbal sermons and teaching may soon be forgotten, but God's written Word endures forever!! And Peter no doubt felt that like the practice of Paul, written letters were one way in which to keep the pristine Apostolic message and tradition alive forever. Men die, but God's Word endures forever!! Later on at 3:1-2, Peter says that he has written two letters as "reminders", and that he wants us to "recall" the message that has come through the apostles and prophets. This is so that they will not be "carried away by the error of lawless men" (3:17). We should always be wary then, of people who arrive with a "new" or "different" Christian message, or seeking to sidetrack Christians with a more attractive or "relevant" message. Rather, the supreme challenge in Peter's words is to "remind" people of the truth that has already been given. In this respect*

Os Guinness also reminds us of the "idolatry of relevance" in much modern preaching and teaching when he says: "By our uncritical pursuit of relevance we have actually courted irrelevance; by our breathless chase after relevance without a matching commitment to faithfulness, we have become not only unfaithful, but irrelevant; by our determined efforts to redefine ourselves in ways that are more compelling to the modern world than are faithful to Christ, we have lost not only our identity but our authority and relevance. Our crying need is to be faithful as well as relevant."

2. Secondly we are presented with a Faith founded upon Facts (verses 16-18)

*This middle section is connected to the previous section (verses 12-15), with the opening word "for" in verse 16, which suggests that Peter's teaching will be worth remembering long after he has departed, because of the fresh argument of this section. And what precisely is this argument that will give both credibility and authority to what Peter teaches? To begin with, Peter appeals to the "eyewitness" nature of his evidence along with that of the other apostles (the word "we" is mentioned five times in this section), who witnessed the life, supernatural deeds, and teachings of Jesus firsthand. Secondly, because of this fact, Peter's message was not made up of myths and imaginative stories as was the case with the false teachers, whose message followed this pattern (2:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:4). In fact, the one event that Peter recalls from his time with Jesus above all others was that of the Transfiguration event (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36), and possibly alluded to at John 1:14. **Why recall this event in particular?** Because within this event, Peter both "saw" the majesty and glory of God, and "heard" the voice of God the Father when He said, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." However, Peter omits the final "listen to him" from Matthew 17:5. The reason for this is that Peter wants us to focus on what **God had said** right at that precise moment, rather than on the subsequent teaching ministry of Jesus. Finally, the apostles' credibility and authority is defended on the basis of what they had both "seen" and "heard", also used before the Jewish council (Acts 4:20). We too can be confident to speak and defend our faith because we also hear the voice of God through the living Word of God. Finally, the words of Peter at verse 16 about declaring the "power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" could refer to any stage of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, including the Transfiguration event itself, but may also point from this event to Jesus' second coming where the full glory of Christ will finally be revealed (Mark 9:1; 13:26).*

3. Thirdly, all of these events confirm the words of the Prophets (verses 19-21)

In the same manner in which Peter and the Apostles "heard" the voice of God as the basis of their authoritative witness and teaching (vv. 16-18), so also the Old Testament prophets did not speak on their own behalf, but rather only spoke the words that they had "heard" and received from God, beginning with Moses (Deuteronomy 18:14-22), and endorsed at Jeremiah 23:16-18. Thus true prophecy, as with genuine apostolic teaching, does not have its origins in the will of man (as with the false teachers), but "men spoke from God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Interestingly, Paul also shared this same thought at 2 Timothy 3:16.

Conclusion:-

Peter's supreme challenge was to "remind" people of the truth that had already been given, and in which we stand. Today, how does this challenge us in terms of God's Word, and the temptation to perhaps settle for something more fashionable and easy?