

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 8, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

WHAT TO KNOW TO ...



A STUDY IN 2 PETER

## NECESSARY REMINDERS

*2 Peter 1:12-15*

*“<sup>12</sup> For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. <sup>13</sup> Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, <sup>14</sup> knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. <sup>15</sup> Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” -2 Peter 1:12-15 (NKJV)*

### **5 Important Background Information for the Book of 2 Peter:**

- 1. The author of the book of 2 Peter is the APOSTLE PETER, the head and lead spokesman for Jesus’ twelve disciples** - The New Testament had four different names for Peter: Simeon (the Hebrew for Peter’s original name, Acts 15:14, 2 Peter 1:1), Simon (the Greek name for Simeon applied 49 times in the New Testament), Cephas (a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word for rock [ כִּפְיָא קִיפּוֹאָס ]; this is used to play off of πέτρα), Peter (Πέτρος) the leader and spokesman for the early disciples. This is how he is addressed in the greeting emphasizing his authority to speak. The early New Testament Church almost exclusively regarded Peter as the author of the letter. And of course there is the internal evidence supporting Peter’s authorship, the letter claims to be from “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1), the writer claims to be the readers “fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1), the writer identifies “Silas” (Silvanus) as one who helped him to write the letter ( 1 Peter 5:12; see also Acts 15:22 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1), the writer also sends greetings from Mark (1 Peter 5:13; see Acts 12:12).
- 2. The book of 2 Peter (like Paul’s letter to the Galatians) is actually a LETTER, meant to be circulated to multiple early New Testament churches and believers** - Peter is a letter written in normal epistle form and style. The rhetorical and didactic nature of the letter may mean that it was intended to be read aloud to the congregations. It is best to see this letter as a

circular type of letter much like Peter's first letter in its present form which was directed to all the churches in the areas mentioned in northern Asia minor in 1 Peter.

3. **The recipient of Peter's second letter were the same recipients of Peter's earlier letter (1 Peter), a group of mostly GENTILE BELIEVERS/CHRISTIANS who were now living throughout the five Roman provinces of Asia Minor** – This area would be what is today, Turkey. Peter says nothing directly in the salutation to specifically name the recipients of this letter. But according to 2 Peter 3:1-2, "*Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),<sup>2</sup> that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of <sup>us</sup>, the apostles of the Lord and Savior...*" Peter was writing another epistle to the same people to whom he wrote 1 Peter. In his first letter, he spelled out that he was writing "to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). These provinces were located in an area of Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey. The Christians to whom Peter wrote were mostly Gentiles.
4. **2 Peter is believed to have been written around AD 67-68, just before Peter death** – Tradition holds that both Paul and Peter were victims of persecution under Nero at Rome after the disastrous fire in the city of Rome on July 19 of AD 64. Peter's first letter (1 Peter) was written just after the burning of Rome as persecution broke out against Christians and they were literally scattered across the New Testament world, particularly into the area of Asia Minor. 2 Peter was written sometime later toward the end of Peter's life as he himself faced persecution and martyrdom at the hands of Nero. Consensus is that Peter wrote this second letter from prison in Rome, where he was facing imminent death. Nero died in AD 68, and tradition says that Peter died by crucifixion (upside down) prior to Nero's death. That would put the writing of the letter sometime in AD 67-68 just before his death.
5. **The purpose of 2 Peter was to warn these first century Christians of FALSE TEACHERS who had infiltrated church in the area of Asia Minor** - Unlike his first letter, written to encourage Christians being persecuted and scatter under Nero's brutal and tyrannical rule, 2 Peter was written to warn again and alert these vulnerable believers to the dangers of false religions and false professors that could undermine their own faith and sabotage the early church already reeling from these terrible times of persecution. Since the time of the writing and sending of his first letter, Peter had become increasingly concerned about false teachers who were infiltrating the churches in Asia Mino. Though these false teachers had already caused trouble, Peter expected that their heretical doctrines and immoral life-styles would result in more damage in the future. Thus Peter, in an almost last will and testament, wrote to warn the beloved believers in Christ about the doctrinal dangers they were facing.

Second Peter was written for the purpose of exposing, thwarting, and defeating the invasion of false teachers into the church. Peter intended to instruct Christians in how to defend themselves against these false teachers and their deceptive lies. Dr. John MacArthur calls 2 Peter, "This book is the most graphic and penetrating exposé of false teachers in Scripture, comparable only to Jude." The description of the false teachers is somewhat generic. Peter does not identify some specific false religion, cult, or system of teaching. If anybody in the early church knew the importance of being alert, it had to be the Apostle Peter. Remember he had a tendency in his early years to feel overconfident when danger was near and to overlook the Master's warnings.

**Lessons Peter learned the hard way: *Experience is the great teacher!***

- (1) **Matthew 16:13-23** – What might Peter have learned? He rushed ahead when he should have waited
- (2) **Mark 14:32-42** – What might Peter have learned? He slept when he should have prayed;
- (3) **Matthew 26:31-35 / Luke 22:31-34** – What might Peter have learned? He talked when he should have listened.
- (4) **John 18:1-11** – What might Peter have learned? He was courageous, but careless, Christians.

***In what ways are Christians “careless” when they should be cautious and courageous?***

But Peter learned his lesson, and he wanted to help us learn it too. In his first epistle, Peter emphasized the grace of God (1 Peter 5:12), but in this second letter, his emphasis is on the knowledge of God. **The word “know” or “knowledge” is used at least 13 times in this short epistle.** The word does not mean a mere intellectual understanding of some truth, though that is included. It means a living participation in the truth in the sense that our Lord used it in **John 17:3, “This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.”**

Peter opened his letter with a description of the Christian life. Before describing the counterfeits, he describes the real thing... true believers. The best way to detect falsehood is to understand the characteristic of the truth. Peter makes some important affirmations about true or genuine Christian life. We might call these “Characteristics of True Christian Character”

**INTRODUCTION**

Why do people pick the church they go to? Let’s list some of the reasons in the spaces provided below:

**Why do people pick churches?**

- |                                   |     |            |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|------------|-----|
| (1) <u>Ex. the style of music</u> | [ ] | (6) _____  | [ ] |
| (2) _____                         | [ ] | (7) _____  | [ ] |
| (3) _____                         | [ ] | (8) _____  | [ ] |
| (4) _____                         | [ ] | (9) _____  | [ ] |
| (5) _____                         | [ ] | (10) _____ | [ ] |

Now, beside each of these you will notice a box. Place a check mark [✓] beside each one that you consider to be a “superficial” reason to pick or join a church.

The reality is that people pick churches for the most superficial reasons. The following are all reasons that I have heard, some for why people come to this church and some for why they go to another church:

- **“Our kids like it there because it’s fun.”** - The truth is, same thing could be said about the circus.)
- **“Our friends go there and there is an atmosphere of acceptance.”** - The same could perhaps be said of “Main Street Tavern” down town.
- **“The music rocks.”** - To be honest with you, this one surprised me a bit, because I’m not sure anyone else would characterize our music as “rocking”... traditional, inspirational

maybe not “rocking,” but okay. Our music minister “rocks” in my opinion, but I might be kind of partial to her! No, seriously! I get why they said it. They happened to prefer our style of music... more traditional hymns, and I’m okay with that. And I like it too, but I have to be honest that statement made me laugh. “The music rocks” sound more like a hopping music venue or something. The same could be said of a performance of a hot musical group.

- **“I get a good feeling when I go there.”** – The one gets said about our church a lot. The truth is, I could say the same thing about my favorite restaurant. I get a good feeling there too... right in my belly! And I’m glad you get a good feeling when you come here, but I’m not sure that is the most sound reason to choose a church. Some churches are only about feeling, and making you feel good about your self and failing to preach the truth, that sometimes steps on your toes and doesn’t feel so good.
- **“The people are so warm and inviting!”** – To be honest about this one, it gets said about our church a lot, and I’m glad it is said. It is a good quality and meant as a compliment, but can I just tell you it’s not a good primary reason to pick a church. Churches can be warm and inviting, and friendly and accepting and be doctrinally off kilter. People join cults because they are warm and inviting and accepting!

Of course, children’s programs at church should have an element of fun to them. We shouldn’t bore kids with the truth. And, churches should be friendly. Fellowship is important. I’m not so sure that the music should “rock,” but it should be spiritually uplifting and musically worshipful and inspiring... and pleasant. I don’t know what to say about the “good feelings” comments. I want you to feel good about church, but for the right reasons. Occasionally, but not often enough, I hear, “I go to that church because they preach the Word of God clearly and without compromise.” That should be the primary factor in deciding which church you will join.

➡ As pastor Steven J. Cole says it, “Due to the pervasive postmodern thinking that there is no such thing as absolute truth, especially in the spiritual realm, sound doctrine has taken a back seat to many other things. Also, there is a strong cultural emphasis on inclusiveness and accepting everyone, no matter what the person thinks or believes... but doctrine often is divisive, not inclusive. Holding to sound doctrine (often) seems opposed to love and acceptance. So even many popular pastors chant the mantra, ‘They will know we are Christians by our love, not by our doctrine.’”

- **What do you think about that quote?**
- **What do you think he is saying?**
- **Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?**

The apostles and early church leaders were very concerned that the churches be steadfast in holding to sound doctrine.

- **Paul** - In his final three letters (1 & 2 Timothy & Titus), the apostle Paul repeatedly emphasizes the need for Timothy to hold to and preach sound doctrine.
- **John** - John, the apostle of love, emphasizes sound doctrine in his three epistles.
- **Jude** - Jude (v. 3) appeals to his readers to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”

And Peter will spend all of chapter 2 and a good part of chapter 3 warning about false teachers. He ends this short letter exhorting his readers in 2 Peter 3:17, *“<sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.”* “Steadfastness” is related (in Greek) to the word in verse 12 of our text, *“established in the truth.”* Peter is emphasizing the need for believers to be firmly grounded in the essential truths of the gospel, so that we don’t fall prey to false teachers.

There are three basic purposes for verses 12-15 (2 Peter 1:12-15) (I am indebted here to Peter Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* [Eerdmans], p. 191):

### **3 Basic Purposes for 2 Peter 1:12-15:**

- (1) **Points back to verses 1-11**- Peter underscores the importance of the opening verses (1-11), which are a summary of the gospel and the Christian life.
- (2) **Points to Peter’s own life and testament** - Our text sets up the whole letter as Peter’s final testament, thus emphasizing its authority and importance. A great man’s dying words should be listened to carefully.
- (3) **Point forward to the rest of the letter** - These verses form a bridge into the rest of the letter. Peter acknowledges that he is not going to say anything new, which his readers don’t already know. This serves as an antidote to the false teachers, who draw in the unsuspecting with their novel ideas. Peter wants his readers to be satisfied with the essential truths of the gospel and to come back to these truths again and again, even after he is gone.

We can sum up Peter’s message with key thought from 2 Peter and from these verses (2 Peter 1:12-15):

**KEY TAKE AWAY:** *No matter where you’re at in the Lord, you need sound teachers to remind you often of the basic truths of the faith so that you stay on course.*

## **NECESSARY REMINDERS OF SOUND TEACHERS**

Peter models for us four characteristics of sound teachers. While these are not comprehensive, they should help if you’re looking for a solid church or giving advice to others who are.

### **4 Characteristics of Sound Teachers:**

1. **Sound teachers are always ready to remind their students of what they already know** – Notice our passage again in 2 Peter 1:12-15, *“<sup>12</sup> For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.<sup>13</sup> Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,<sup>14</sup> knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.<sup>15</sup> Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”* -2 Peter 1:12-15 (NKJV)

In verse 12, Peter says, *“<sup>12</sup> For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.”* Essentially Peter says, “I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them...” In verse 13, he says, *“<sup>13</sup> Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you.”* In verse 15, he repeats, *“<sup>15</sup> Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”*

Peter reminds me of one of my seminary Old Testament professors. Every class he would repeat his teaching method. He would say, “Boys, I’m going to tell you what I am going to tell you. Then I’ll tell you. Then, I’ll tell you what I told you. Then, I’ll review.” He knew that repetition is a key to learning.

Have you ever noticed how often the Bible repeats the truth?

- *Deuteronomy 5 repeats the giving of the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20.*
- *First and 2 Chronicles go over much of the same history that you find in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings.*
- *Several Psalms (or portions of them) are repeated, plus many of the psalms go over the same themes.*
- *The Old Testament prophets preach similar messages of God’s judgment on sin, judgment on the wicked nations, and His faithful promises to His people in spite of their sins.*
- *The New Testament begins with three gospels that are very similar in content.*
- *Jesus often repeated His messages and parables. He told us to partake of the Lord’s Supper repeatedly in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19).*
- *Romans and Galatians deal with similar themes, as do Ephesians and Colossians.*
- *Jude and 2 Peter have overlapping messages.*

Paul told the Philippians 3:1, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.” Then a little later in Philippians 4:4, he repeats, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”

He reminded Timothy to stir up the gift which Timothy already knew about (2 Tim. 1:6). (See, also, Rom. 15:15; 1 Cor. 15:1; 2 Tim. 2:14; Titus 3:1; Jude 5.) If you’re a parent, you’ve done the same thing with your children. You have said, “How many times do I need to tell you?” Answer: At least once more, because your child hasn’t got it yet! Years ago, I saw a Henry Brandt video on child rearing where he asked, “How long does it take to teach Johnnie to make his bed?” (Pause) “Twenty years!” He was humorously emphasizing the reality that a large part of parenting is to remind your child of what he already knows. The fact is, even as adults we often don’t get it at first, or if we do get it, we easily forget it. And so we need frequent reminders of basic spiritual truths that we already know, so that we don’t drift off course.

Repetition is a great teacher, why? There are three basic reasons why repetition in the Bible is so important.

### **3 Reasons Repetition is important in the Bible: (Using the Gospels as an example of repetition)**

- (1) **The use of repetition in the Bible usually emphasizes the importance of a person, theme, or event** - This makes sense for the Gospels because the story of Jesus' earthly ministry and mission is the most important event in the history of the world. The presence of four distinct accounts of Jesus' life in the Gospels emphasizes His importance.

- (2) **The repetition of the Gospels offers greater credibility** - In the ancient world, legal testimonies were considered valid if they could be substantiated by at least two or three witnesses (see Deuteronomy 19:15). By having four separate accounts (as in the Gospels) written by four distinct witnesses, the Bible offers a highly reliable portrait of who Jesus was and what He did on our behalf.
- (3) **The use of repetition in the Gospels allowed the biblical authors to approach Jesus' story from different angles and perspectives** - I've written a separate article that explains the primary purpose and audience for each of the four Gospels. It's a worthwhile read if you have the time.

On a personal level repetition has many benefits for our own growth as a believers. For Peter, I can't help but think that he may have had a couple of things in mind as he thinks of the important of repetition in the lives of these believers he is addressing now in his second letter. I think these may be two of the more direct benefits of being reminded (repetition) of what we believe.

## ➡ **2 Key Benefits of Being Reminded in Peter's Mind:**

- (1) **Repetition grounds us in what we believe in tough times that can shake our faith**
- (2) **Repetition grounds us in what we believer in the face of false teachers and false teaching.**

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## **3 Personal Benefits of Repetition:**

- (1) **Repetition will help to ground us in the truths being taught -**
- (2) **Repetition may aid in retention/remembering –**
- (3) **Repetition reminds us of what is important -**

Sound teachers are always ready to remind their students of what they already know.

2. **Sound teachers emphasize the basic truths of the Christian life** - I've already been touching on this, but to remind you, although Peter was an apostle and could have focused on some esoteric aspects of the faith, he brings his readers back to the basics. **He reminds them of essential truths that they already knew.** The false teachers may have been luring people by talking about new, secret truths that sounded very interesting. But sound teachers stick to the basic truths.

Notice Peter's words again in **verse 12, "2 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth."** Peter knows that his readers (v. 12) **"have been established in and know the truth."** But that doesn't keep him from saying it again. Peter's statement about being established in the truth shows that there is a body of definable, knowable spiritual truth that is foundational for the Christian life. Without knowing these things, your Christian life will be shaky, at best.

Contrary to those in the "emerging church," who say that doctrine is not important or that we can't really know spiritual truth for certain, Peter says that there is a body of truth and that such truth is foundational or strengthening (the meaning of the Greek word). It is the same

word that Jesus used when He told Peter that after his denials, when he was restored, he should “strengthen” his brothers (Luke 22:32). “For this reason” and “these things” (v. 12) take us back to verses 1-11, where Peter lays out the essentials of the gospel and the entire Christian life. (READ: 2 Peter 1:1-11)

**Basic doctrinal truth we need to know and be reminded of: (that Peter reminds us of)**

(1) **Salvation** - The gospel involves a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which we receive “by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ” In 2 Peter 1:1 Peter speaks of “... *those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of God and Savior Jesus Christ.*” Why is it so important that we understand the doctrine of salvation, how we are saved, what keeps us saved, and basic doctrine surrounding the doctrine of salvation (eternal security, grace vs works, redemption, justification, sanctification, glorification)? One sure reason we need to be grounded and know what the Bible teaches and be grounded in the doctrine(s) of salvation is that it is one area that leads many into false teaching.

**What are some false teachings/doctrines that can follow an incorrect understanding of the doctrine(s) of salvation?**

- **Falling from grace** – The idea of losing one’s salvation or falling from grace comes from a poor understand of God’s Word and the doctrine of salvation, particularly “eternal security of the believer.”
- **Salvation by works** – Most cults and false religions preach/teach salvation by works or by human effort. This is one of the identifying characteristics of a cult and/or false religion, salvation by works. Salvation by works, that is that one is saved by human effort or what they do, be that religious duty and efforts, moral living and uprightness, or good works/efforts... being “good.” Scripture is very clear on this point and it needs to be stated and restated. Paul clearly state it in Ephesians 2:8-9, “*8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.*”
- **Legalism** – Legalism is a dangerous “false teaching” that can corrupt and destroy not only churches, but those involved in that church or religious group. It is oppressive, enslaving and unbiblical. Legalism is what characterized the corruption of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. Legalism comes from a faulty/false understanding of what salvation biblically. Legalism basically says you are saved by law/ritual keeping... you must keep this ritual or festival, this law in order to be made right with God. This is basically the same as salvation by works, and is actually the false teaching of the Judiazers that Paul confronts throughout the book/letter of Galatians.

(2) **Christ’s Sufficiency** – In verse 3 Peter write, “*3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.*” At the instant that we are born again, God gives us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ, who calls us by His own glory and excellence (1:3). “His” in verse 3 refers to Jesus Christ. Christ’s power is the source of the believers sufficiency and perseverance. The phrase, “*all things that pertain to life*” speaks of the genuine Christian/believer being eternally secure in his or her salvation and persevering and growing because he or she has received everything

necessary to sustain eternal life through Christ's power. We do not save ourselves, nor can we keep ourselves saved. It is all the work of Christ. He is sufficient!

(3) **Holy Living** - God gives us His precious promises, which make us partakers of the divine nature, so that we escape the corruption that is in the world by lust. Peter writes in verse 4, *“<sup>4</sup>by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the <sup>[e]</sup>corruption that is in the world through lust.”* He doesn't only save us but He gives us all that we need through is precious promises, especially His indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, to live the Christian life, to live above sin, to walk in newness of life. We cannot do this on our own, but through Christ in us.

(4) **Christian Growth** - Given these all-sufficient resources, we are responsible to add to our faith and grow in seven qualities, which Peter sets forth verses 5-7.

### 7 Qualities of Christian Growth:

1. Virtue
2. Knowledge
3. Self-control
4. Perseverance
5. Godliness
6. Brotherly kindness
7. Love

(5) **Christian productivity** - Then (2 Peter 1:8-11), Peter motivates us by showing us the results or benefits of growing in these qualities, namely, that we will be useful and fruitful, assured of our salvation, and headed for a glorious eternity in heaven. We are not only to live our lives in a holy manner, we are to drawing others to Christ, reaching our hurting world with the good news, sharing hope with others, evangelizing, witnessing, reaching out to others.

All believers who have received a basic grounding in the faith know these things. But, we need reminders of them.

- **Thomas Schreiner** (*The New American Commentary, 1, 2 Peter, Jude [Broadman], p. 309*) says, *“Believers know the gospel, and yet they must, in a sense, relearn it every day.”*
- **Milton Vincent** has a helpful little book, *A Gospel Primer [self-published]*, in which he makes the point that, *“We (Christians) need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day.”*
- **Jerry Bridges** makes the same point (*“Four Essentials for Finishing Well,”* in *Stand*, ed. by John Piper and Justin Taylor [Crossway Books], pp. 22-28). *“Let your heart be warmed often by the gospel and by other essential truths.”*

... such as those that Peter rehearses for us here.

3. **Sound teachers are in earnest because they know that life is short, so they use their time to serve the Lord** - Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:13-14, *“<sup>13</sup>Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am*

*in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, <sup>14</sup>knowing that shortly I must <sup>15</sup>put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”*

Some say that the Lord must have given Peter a special word that his death was near, and that is possible. But I think Peter probably is referring to the incident after Jesus’ resurrection when He told Peter (John 21:18), *“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.”* John adds (21:19), *“Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.”*

Now that he was older, Peter knew that his time was short. Nero was intensifying his persecution of believers. Peter sensed that Jesus’ words were about to come true. Tradition (recorded by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:1, 30) says that Peter was crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to be crucified right side up, as Jesus was. Peter’s words here teach us three important lessons about life and death:

### **3 Important Lessons About Life and Death:**

**(1) Because life is short, live as a pilgrim, focused on the things that are eternal** - Twice, Peter uses the word for his body, translated *“tent.”* It’s the Greek word for “tabernacle,” or “tent.” Tents are temporary dwellings, used by nomads or travelers. It points to the shortness of life and the fact that we are only pilgrims, traveling through to our heavenly home. Peter emphasized this theme in his first letter. He begins it (1 Pet. 1:1), *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout”* a number of provinces in Asia Minor. He continues the theme (1:17), *“If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth.”* He adds (2:11), *“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”*

Our stay on earth is short. We’re pilgrims and aliens here. A pilgrim views life differently than a permanent resident does. He is just passing through. If you’re staying in a hotel, you don’t get too attached. You don’t move in your own furniture and put your own pictures on the walls. You’re just there for a short time and you’re gone.

For us as believers, heaven is our permanent home. All of us will shortly be laying aside our earthly tent. Paul makes the point (**READ: 2 Cor. 4:16-18**) that since our bodies are decaying, we should be focused, not on the things that are seen, but on the things which are not seen, which are eternal.

**(2) Because life is short, cultivate a biblical view of death** - Peter’s words teach us several things about how we should view death.

### **A Right Christian Biblical Perspective of Death:**

**1. Christians don’t have to fear death** - For about 30 years at this point, Peter had been living with the knowledge that he would die an unpleasant death as an old man. And yet, he is not worried or upset about it! He views it as laying aside his body, a

temporary tent, as he would take off old clothes. He wasn't complaining that as a faithful apostle, he deserved better treatment in how he would die. He was at peace with God's sovereign plan for his life. He demonstrated this same peace when he was supposed to be executed by Herod the next morning. The delivering angel found him so sound asleep that he had to hit him on the side to wake him up (Acts 12:7)! Peter was subject to the Lord's will about when and how he died, so he was not anxious about his death.

2. **Death is not the end** - Also, we learn that death is not cessation of existence, but rather separation of the soul from the body. At death, we lay aside this tent. The real you is not your body, although you dwell in it here on earth. The real you is your soul. To be absent from the body is "to be at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). (Paul, by the way, uses the same analogy of our bodies being a tent in 2 Cor. 5:1.) When Christ returns, we will receive our new resurrection bodies that will not be subject to aging, disease, or death (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 35-57).
3. **Death is glorious new beginning, a setting free** - Also, death is a departure or exodus from the slavery of this body of sin to a glorious eternity with the Lord. Peter's word (1:15), "departure," is literally, *exodus* (Heb. 11:22). The only other time it is used of death is on the Mount of Transfiguration (which Peter refers to in verses 16-18), when Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about His departure (Luke 9:31). We should view death as departing from this earth to be with the Lord in heaven.

- (3) **Because life is short, we must use our remaining time on earth to serve the Lord.** Although Peter was probably in his sixties by this time, he wasn't looking to retire and spend his final days on the golf course or taking videos of the national parks. These verses convey a sense of urgency and effort. He says in 2 Peter 1:12, "<sup>12</sup> For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth." And in verse 15, "<sup>5</sup> Moreover I will be careful (diligent) to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease." "Careful" is the same word that Peter used in verses 5 & 10. Peter's awareness of the shortness of life spurred him on to work all the harder. He knew that eternal matters were at stake (1:11), so he was all the more diligent to fulfill his ministry.

His words remind me of the Puritan, Richard Baxter, who said, "I preached, as never sure to preach again, and as a dying Man to dying Men" ("Love Breathing Thanks and Praise," in *Christianity Today* [1/13/92], p. 32). Like Peter, Baxter was in earnest because he knew that life is short.

I confess that as I get older, the stress created by the constant demands and deadlines of ministry gets to me at times. The thought of kicking back sounds good. In his book **"Stand"** edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor, and subtitled, "A call for the endurance of the saints," Piper writes a provocative chapter, "Getting Old to the Glory of God," where he says (p. 37), "Getting old to the glory of God means getting old in a way that makes God look glorious. It means living and dying in a way that shows God to be the all-satisfying Treasure that he is. So it would include, for example, not living in ways that make this world look like your treasure. Which means that most of the suggestions that

this world offers us for our retirement years are bad ideas. They call us to live in a way that would make this world look like our treasure. And when that happens, God is belittled.”

**If you are financially in a position where you no longer need to work, ask the Lord how He would like to use your remaining years for His purpose and glory.** We’ve seen that (1) Sound teachers are always ready to remind their students of what they already know. (2) They emphasize the basic truths of the Christian life. (3) They are in earnest because they know that life is short, so they use their time to serve the Lord.

4. **Sound teachers are diligent to awaken their students to remember the essential truths that will guide them long after the teacher is gone** - In verse 13, Peter considers it right to stir up his readers by way of reminder... notice it, **“<sup>13</sup> Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this <sup>14</sup>tent, to stir you up by reminding you.”** Here’s Peter, “I’m about to stir you up!” “Stir up” means to arouse or awaken from sleep.

Peter himself had learned this the hard way. Jesus warned him in advance that he would deny Him. Then, in the garden, Jesus told Peter, James, and John to stay alert and pray so that they would not enter into temptation. But they all fell asleep and, just a short time later, Peter denied his Lord (Matt. 26:36-46).

Because of our fallen nature, we’re all prone to be spiritually sluggish and lazy. Because of this, we need sound teachers who are spiritually alert to prod us to wake up to the essential truths of God’s Word. To cite **Richard Baxter** again, who was writing to pastors, he said (*The Reformed Pastor* [Banner of Truth], p. 148), **“What! Speak coldly for God, and for men’s salvation? Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet speak in a drowsy tone? In the name of God, brethren, labor to awaken your own hearts, before you go to the pulpit, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners. ... Oh, speak not one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell.”**

When Peter says that after his departure his readers will be able to call these things to mind, he was probably referring to this very letter, which he left to them as his legacy. **While none of us can leave that kind of legacy behind, we can leave the legacy of the seed of the gospel sown in the hearts of our children and others with whom we have contact. We can leave the legacy of a godly example and good deeds, so that when others think of us, they will be drawn to our Savior and Lord.**

## CONCLUSION

So, no matter where you are in your walk and relationship with the Lord, Peter is saying that you need sound teachers to remind you often of the basic truths of the faith so that you stay on course. By way of applying his words, I would encourage you to do several things:

**Things to do to keep you on course in your Christian walk: (to keep you grounded on basic truths of the faith and for protection against false teachers)**

- (1) **Read the Bible through over and over** - The godly George Muller is said to have read it through over 200 times! I try to read the Bible through every year in a different translation (I am reading through the KJV this year).
- (2) **Memorize key portions of the Bible through frequent repetition** – I like to write out key verses on index cards to help me memorize.
- (3) **Regularly sit under the faithful ministry of the Word** - We have so many wonderful resources available online today. There are podcast and radio programs from wonder Bible preachers/teacher (MacArthur, Swindoll, Stanley, Yousief, etc.)
- (4) **Read solid books that will help you grow to know Christ better** – You know I love to read good Christian book, and I am always suggesting good book that are out there that will help you grow. Here is a good suggestion for you right now. Read Mark Batterson’s new book, “Double Blessing.”

I know—none of these suggestions are original or new. I’m just reminding you of what you already know!

### **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

1. Do you agree that sound Bible teaching should be the primary consideration in choosing a church? Why/why not?
2. Discuss: most spiritual failure is failure in the basics.
3. Is the American version of retirement a biblical concept? How should it be modified?
4. What kind of legacy do you want to leave your children and others?

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