

## **2 Peter 1:12-21 Divine Power to Remember the Important Things**

We have entitled this little series in 2 Peter *Divine Power*. This has been inspired by ch.1:3 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness...”. It is a major truth of the Christian faith that we live under and by the power of God’s grace in our lives. God is the source of all things – it is he who awakens us and brings us to new life. God works from outside of us upon us – he convicts us of sin and he leads us to Jesus and he enables us to trust in Him. All this is as a result of divine enabling. Yes we have an aspect of co-operating with the Spirit of God but he takes the lead. Elsewhere in the Bible Paul says we are dead in trespasses and sins, if the dead are to come to life it is because an outside agency is working, this divine power of God awakens our souls to God. As we move through this little letter we will see how God’s divine power helps us to live as Christians.

Last week we saw that his divine power helps us to grow in sanctification. As we come to know Jesus we grow in understanding of his character and we open ourselves up more and more to the Spirit’s influence. As we do this we find that we add to our faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

It is one thing to say we know Jesus but the proof of that is that we grow in these qualities. We should be eager to make our calling and election sure – there should be strong evidence that we know Jesus because others see the difference that it makes. Belief results in changed behaviour. The divine power that courses through our veins leads to a changed and changing life. We should never stop growing and changing because we do not reach perfection this side of heaven.

Now as Peter moves into the second part of this first chapter he wants to stir up his readers to remember what is truly important in life. In life we get bombarded with all kinds of information and confusion and busyness and distractions can creep in and we can lose our way. I find that many Christians are losing their way as we enter a more secular phase of western culture today. Some are saying that we now live in a post-Christian society. Now this is hard to cope with if you have been used to old certainties built on Christian principles.

But western society has been shaken recently from its Christian moorings. Now in some ways this is bad because we see good things like marriage being undermined and increasing threat to life at the most vulnerable stages of birth and old age, but there also good things can come out of this as well. We are forced to think through what we believe and why. We are forced to think about what is truly of God and what is just of culture. So as boundaries are pushed on marriage for example we need to ask what are the creational principles and what is simply cultural. Is one man and one woman joining together creational for all time or is it cultural. Now we are not getting into that debate this evening but I am simply using it as an example of how what is happening all around us causes us to think through our faith. What is robust and can stand and what needs to change and fall away.

Now as Peter contemplates his death in the not too distant future he wants to leave the church with some important things to remember. It is thought that Peter was martyred between AD 65-68 under the time of Nero. His body it was thought was buried on the hill in Rome where the Vatican stands. We can't be sure of this but it's probable. There are three main areas which Peter wants to remind people of relating to 1 his body and of his own mortality, 2 the gospel and 3 the scriptures.

1.Tent not Temple (ch 1 v.12-15). Peter knows he has not long left in the tent of this body. He is very aware of his own mortality and that his time on earth is nearly over. Our bodies are more like a tent than a temple. We do not live forever here, our bodies are actually quite frail and feeble – dust we are and to dust we will return. We need to remind ourselves of this at a time when we are living longer as a general rule. But we will still die. It is the last great taboo subject. Paul in 2 Cor.5:1 uses this analogy as well of the body being like a tent that encloses the soul. When the earthly tent is destroyed the building from God – the soul continues into eternity.

We need to keep reminding ourselves of this because in this secular, very materialistic age, where there is a premium placed on what we can see and feel and hear the spiritual side of us is played down. Peter wants us to see what is truly important – the eternal over the temporal. I was reading again this week in devotions that passage where Jesus heals a paralytic who is let down through the roof. Right away Jesus goes to the most important thing - the soul. Everyone is concerned about the guy's physical paralysis but Jesus sees through that to the more important and says "*your sins are forgiven*".

The modern thinking is not that the body is a tent but a temple to be pampered, pushed and preened to look it best and we will devote thousands of pounds to keeping it fit, toned, well dressed. Now it is good to look after our bodies and not to abuse them. We are to be good stewards of our bodies – they are our best resource and they can be a resource for God but we can easily move, as many have today, from taking good care of ourselves to actually worshipping our bodies. Our bodies are a tent not a temple. Now I know Paul calls them a temple of the Holy Spirit and therefore we should not misuse our bodies immorally but that is a different thing from worshipping the body.

So as he writes Peter here is right away reminding them of something important and it is happening to him – our bodies are temporary, they are a fragile tent that are here for a certain time.

Now while our bodies are here we have influence for good and that is what Peter wants to have. All of us have spheres of influence and as long as have breath in our bodies we should be seeking to influence people into the kingdom of God. As we add to our faith all the qualities which Peter lists in the first part of the chapter we trust that people will be influenced towards considering Jesus.

Peter in writing here knows that he is temporal and so are the people that he is writing to, but he wants them to discern what is truly and really important. He knows they know them but he wants these things to be at the forefront of their minds. Sometimes when we near the end of our time the really important things come to the surface and all the trivial stuff fades away. We get things into perspective as eternity looms closer. So even though as he says in v.12 that they are established in the truth we can never take things for granted.

Now it is interesting what he says in v.15. How will he make every effort to see that after his departure they will remember these things. I suppose one way is in leaving this letter – here is a permanent record of his thoughts. Indeed here we are over 2000 years later reading them and thinking about them. He has succeeded. It is also thought that possibly he knew the Gospel of Mark was on its way and much of that gospel was based by Mark on the preaching of Peter. Mark was the first gospel to be written. We tend to think the gospel were written before the letters because of their placement in the NT but that is not the case. So the influence of Peter would be felt after his death as his two letters were circulated, as people read the gospels and of course the book of Acts. In this way, though dead still he speaks to us. This of course was God's intention - that scripture would pass down through the generations and the apostles teaching would be received and understood. Though Peter was in a temporary tent his teachings would continue. Tent not temple.

## 2.Truth not myth (v.16-18)

Before he leaves this world he wants the readers to know that all he is saying and what it is based upon is not myth, it is not invented by men or women but it is from God and is true. Again today we need to remind ourselves of the truth of what we believe in the face of cynicism, unbelief and indeed outright hostility. We must now expect Christianity to be given a rough ride and viewed as intolerant simply because it dares to say that we believe this is true.

Peter speaks of his own experience to persuade his readers to stand firm in the faith. He was an eye-witness of his majesty. This word majesty is a grand word and refers to God – he is saying in using it that Jesus is God. He is the unique son of God. Those who were on the mountain not only saw but they heard the voice from heaven. I think it is important here to recognise that there were three disciples on the mountain so that the eye-witness testimony could be verified. Sometimes individuals can hallucinate – if Peter had be alone on the mountain with Jesus perhaps he would not have been sure of what he experienced or indeed others would have doubted his story. But we had James, Peter and John together and they could verify each other's story. This was not a made up incident – it actually happened.

In our day, as in Peter's day when Jesus was not physically present we do need to remind ourselves that our faith is based on historical fact. Jesus was physically born, he lived among

us for 33 years, he did actual miracles, he taught the most wonderful things, he was transfigured on a mountain top, he was crucified, dead and buried, he was raised to new life and after a period ascended and there were hundreds of witnesses to these things. We are thousands of years removed from these incidents but they truly happened and those who do not believe in Jesus have to explain what happened. The burden of proof as it were is upon them to explain how these things happened. How do they account for what Peter says he saw on the mountain - was he hallucinating? I don't think so. How do you explain the turnaround of these men's lives from being traditional Jews to being radical followers of Jesus? How do they account for an empty tomb. It was as I reflected on these things in my late teens that I came to the conclusion this is truth and not myth. This is what we need to present to people to get them thinking. How do you explain Peter's experiences? So for his readers when they go through times of doubt Peter wants to bring them back to certain facts. This is truth and not myth.

### 3. God inspired not man-made (v.19-21)

As a further proof to his readers he is saying that not only is he an eye-witness of things that actually happened but additionally the prophecies that were given about Jesus show that he is who he says he is. Perhaps Peter is saying even if you doubt my eye-witness account don't doubt the prophecies which were given hundreds of years ago. Jesus has fulfilled these and this again shows that there is nothing made up about this. God is the source for the prophecies - he is the one in control. Everything from Jesus birth to his death and burial were recorded hundreds of years before it happened - how can you explain that except that it is the hand of God behind it all.

Not only do they foretell the coming of Jesus but many of those same prophecies foretell his second coming. These things have yet to be fulfilled but as Peter says we will do well to pay attention to it for a great light is coming. A day will dawn when he will return. In the NT there is often this mention of the Day - Heb 10:25 let us encourage one another and all the more as we see the Day approaching.... In 2 Peter 3:10 he says the day of the Lord will come like a thief. We are getting closer to the day of Jesus - be ready for it. Hold on to it as one of those important things. The church perhaps has let this slide a bit as an emphasis but we need to get it back front and centre as it was in the apostle's writings. We have a great hope and that fuels everything.

Again one of the things that we need to hold on to and which is under threat is the inspiration of scripture. God's word as originally given is inerrant and inspired. God has given us what he intended to give to us as a guide to life and everything we need to know for salvation. We are people of The Book. This is not any old book but a book that is uniquely inspired. Peter speaks about the prophets being carried along by the Holy Spirit. The word is quite strong here - the sense is of being driven along like the wind drives a boat as it catches the sails.

God is the source of scripture (2 Tim.3:16). As Christians we say that the Bible is the supreme standard for all our beliefs and practices.

2 Timothy 3:16 says *“All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”*.

The ultimate authority is God himself, our creator. We believe that God’s word in the Old and New Testament scriptures is reliable, permanent and accessible. It has been given to us by God to help us to understand him and ourselves. The authority of scripture means that all the words in scripture are God’s words and are above reason and tradition.

We see the beauty of Scripture, 66 books written by many authors over a period of 1500 years, yet it demonstrates remarkable unity and consistency. This is because it ultimately has one author - God.

There are different theories of inspiration. There are three theories of inspiration and how it happened: Dictation            Accommodation            Supervision

We are not exactly sure of how it happened but as an article of faith we believe that God was the source and inspirer of His word. Further *“The Bible is **necessary** for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will”*.

*“This means that Scripture contained all the works he intended his people to have at each stage of the redemptive history, and that it now contains **everything** we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.” (W Grudem)*

As Peter came near to the end of his life he wants to pass on these important things. We also would do well to remember them in the days in which we live. We seek to follow and trust Him until the day comes when he appears or he calls us home. To him be the glory.