

Title: A Friendly Reminder
Date: 1/19/25
Subject: Christians need to be reminded of God's provision, their destiny and the doom of unbelieving.
Scripture: 2 Peter 1:12-21

It may come through a Post-it-note, a scribble on a calendar, a string tied to your finger, an alarm on your phone, an email, a "honey do" list, the voice of a parent: and be accompanied by "just in case you forgot, one more thing, a friendly reminder. Make sure you... Your next appointment is..."

Reminders are everywhere. We all use various ways to remind ourselves and others of things that need to be done. Why do we need reminders? Sometimes we're forgetful, complacent, busy. They help keep us on track and inspire us to action. Get things done. The kid is picked up after school. The doctor is seen. Sometimes it's because the person is slacking off and needs a little bit more push.

I've shared this before, but I think it's worth hearing again. I saw it on a shirt: "When a man says he'll do something, there's no need to remind him every six months."

Peter gives a reminder, but it's not because people are slackers or he doesn't trust them. He cares for them and believes in them. They're knowledgeable and firmly established in the faith. However, this doesn't exempt them from sometimes becoming forgetful, complacent or needing encouragement to stay on track. The reminders also reinforce faith and help when encountering difficulty.

It's like building muscle memory. The football team practices situations so when they arise, the response is automatic. Unlike when my junior varsity football coach put me in as a linebacker. "Birr. Get in there." I had never played the position. I hadn't practiced it. The opposing team's running back came my direction without the ball and the quarterback was rolling in the same direction. I focused on preventing the quarterback from running. I wound up in the middle of them with the football going over my head for a completion and a substantial gain. The coach pulled me out of the game and yelled at me: "What do you think you were doing?" but he used different words. I didn't know what I was doing.

Peter isn't yelling. He gently, yet forcefully, reminds. He has an extremely personal reason for doing so. The Lord had revealed to him that he was going to die soon.

Read 2 Peter 1:12-21

The three R's - Remind, refresh, remember. Remind. Followers of Christ, even those who know these things and are firmly established in the truth, need reminders of "these things." What are "these things"? Almost seems downright unspiritual to talk about spiritual matters as "these things."

"These things" points back earlier in the book to God's provisions for believers and the need for spiritual growth. It also includes what's in the rest of the book - the eternal destiny of believers and the doom of non-believers. We need to keep thinking about what we possess, what God's made available to us, how we're to continue growing in light of what God is preparing for us and for those who don't know Christ as Savior.

Refresh. Our memories need to be refreshed. We get forgetful. The stuff of life - its circumstances, trials, and joys - can distract us. No matter how advanced in the faith we are, we need to have our memories refreshed. We need to hear again and again and again so we don't get forgetful of God and what he's done.

It's dangerous to think we've arrived, to let down our guard. The Bible warns us about being self-confident: the person who thinks he's standing firm needs to be careful that he doesn't fall (1 Cor 10:12). The context recalls the Israelites who thought they were in a great position. They were, but they thought that was all that mattered and didn't refresh their minds as to what God had done and what they were to do. The result - they wandered away from God. The passage comes with a reminder that God is with us to help us.

Remember. Peter knows his time on earth is coming to an end. His deep desire is for people who know Jesus Christ to remember "these things" long past his time of being able to communicate face to face. He plans to make every effort to see that after he's gone people will be able to remember. Two books bear his name as the human author. He's likely also referencing the Gospel of Mark. He was closely associated with the author. The gospel came about as Peter shared the stories of Jesus and from his preaching with Mark recording them.

Followers of Jesus Christ have an historical basis for our faith. Peter states what isn't the basis: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories." Another translation calls them "cunningly devised mystical theories."

Many religious systems have no factual or historical source for their teaching. They are the creations and machinations of the minds of people. Some originated from a person being in a trance or under the influence of drugs and even directly from the devil.

The secular world has many cleverly invented stories. The Marvel Cinematic Universe has produced 45 movies to say nothing of the comic books. Star Wars has fewer movies but a greater franchise value when you add in tv shows, theme parks, merchandise (T-shirts, toys, costumes, blankets, watches, lunch boxes, car accessories, kitchenware). Franchises with greater value are: Mickey Mouse and friends, Winnie the Pooh, Hello Kitty and Pokemon. All of these dream up more and more stories and characters.

The spiritual world is no different. There was an abundance of false teachers in Peter's era. The Gnostics claimed they had secret knowledge, the super secret info which is vital, and the key to unlocking it...but its availability was limited to the enlightened. This line of teaching stretches through the centuries. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, viewed herself as the one who had the key.

Some of the works that claimed Peter's authorship included a romance novel about his travels and a story for those who couldn't afford to go to the theater. There's a whole series of Gnostic Gospels including the Gospel of Mary Magdalene.

These books and teachings weren't included in the canon of scripture. To be recognized as Scripture, a book needed to be authored or endorsed by an apostle who witnessed Christ's life and work. They had to be written during the lifetime of those who lived at the same time as Christ. They needed to conform to sound doctrine. They had to be widely used and accepted by the churches. Acceptance didn't cause something to be part of scripture but was a recognition that it was scripture.

False teachings were full of error and heresy. These included: Jesus was only a spirit, he didn't actually die on the cross but was replaced by a human being who died, his spirit left before the death, as a four year old he turned mud into birds, the birth narrative was changed to say an alien invaded Mary's womb, Jesus visited America after his resurrection, his miracles were simply a long line of fairy tales.

Christianity isn't cleverly invented stories, the figment of imagination of someone on a drug induced high or the product of a consortium of the world's best minds. Jesus was a real historical person. The Bible shares the evidence that is the truth about his coming, teaching, miracles, death and resurrection.

Why can we believe that? There are convincing proofs that Jesus is the Son of God who'd come into the world to free people from their sins. We have first person, eyewitness accounts of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, his majesty and his power.

Peter reminisces as he gives his testimony: "I remember the time two other disciples and I were with Jesus on the mountain. It was covered with a cloud and then a voice spoke: *"This is my Son, whom I love; With him I am well pleased. Listen to him"* (Mt 17:5). I witnessed Jesus' miraculous powers over sickness. He healed my mother-in-law. Jesus displayed his control over nature by calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee, not once but twice. I saw Jesus do what no person could do, what nobody had ever heard of being done. Jesus healed the man who'd been born blind. I heard Christ's teachings. I witnessed the trial, death and resurrection of Jesus. Though I had denied Jesus, there was no denying that Jesus was alive... and he had forgiven me."

The apostle John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:1-3).

Peter and John were two of many who had seen, heard, touched, and walked with Jesus. They provide authoritative knowledge about who Jesus was and what he did. But Peter doesn't want people to just take his word. V. 19 says "We have the word of the prophets made more certain." He's referring to the Old Testament scriptures, which were the written word of God at his time. The point isn't that the apostles verified the Old Testament as true as then the scriptures would be subject to what people say. Rather, the teachings of the Old Testament confirm and verify that what the apostles taught was true. Augustine put the relationship of the two testaments this way: "The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed."

Scripture tells us: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:1-3). Jesus is the Word himself, the final word.

Peter gives the reminder we need to pay attention to God's revelation. V. 19. It's a light shining in dark place. When we're looking for something in a dark room, we flip the switch to turn on the light. We get a

flashlight to shine behind the dresser get to see if the earring fell behind it. We trust that the doctor will turn on the operating room lights when he operates rather than just going by feel.

We're to keep looking toward the light until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts. We need to pay attention till the end when Christ appears and the transformation that comes with him. Light shows the way to go. It provides guidance and hope.

Peter's been building his case and reaches a crescendo. He uses the words "above all." He's come to a point that is incredibly important. Let's reread Vv. 20 and 21.

Scripture didn't originate in some human's mind or creative power. It isn't merely another great piece of literature composed by a brilliant writer.

What would it mean if people were the originators of scripture? People who are wiser because have a bunch of letters behind their names or higher IQs, who are better communicators, have more charisma, who had an out of this world experience or simply says he has the latest update from God could override previous teachings. Maybe artificial intelligence would bring together the best of belief systems and make a declaration.

No. The warnings are about people who claim to have truths that contradict what the Bible says. They're not from God. We need to stay away from those who say they have the key or have rediscovered hidden truths or what others have missed. There are groups who say their leader's proclamations carry the same weight as scripture. No one person is the arbiter of truth. No person can add to or take away from what God has provided. God doesn't have more to divulge and those who claim he does are lying.

God is the author of scripture, its producer and director, but sometimes we refer to the human involved in the process as its author. There've been times I've said that God had Peter, Paul or Matthew write something rather than saying Peter, Paul or Matthew wrote. I've done it to try to emphasize that it's God's words and that humans were the conduit through which God's word came. Both ways are accurate.

Several key theological words that describe vv. 20, 21. The first is revelation. This is act of God the Holy Spirit imparting truth to people. He unveils that which had been previously hidden.

There are two types of revelation. General revelation includes things like creation, history, logic, conscience, moral impulse in the heart. It can communicate the existence of God, his character and power. It doesn't fully reveal God's plan of redemption. Special revelation is needed. This is God presenting himself - truth to a Bible writer and through the person of Jesus. General revelation will never differ from the higher special revelation.

Inspiration. God-breathed. God is the superintending author of his word. His truth is received through the writers' personalities and minds as he guided them to record truth correctly. Human authors weren't robots. God delivered his message to them out loud, in their mind and/or visions which were then written in the vocabulary and personality of the writer. The original written texts called autographs are inspired.

Inerrancy. Without mistakes. God's words, as originally given, were completely without error. It is true and accurate in all areas to which it speaks, not limited to the theological or spiritual. God preserves his truth

through the process of original language, copies, translations and ensures that what we have now can be depended upon as trustworthy.

Two terms flesh out inspiration. Verbal. God used words not just concepts or ideas. Plenary meaning complete and full. Every part of scripture is equally and fully inspired. God left nothing out but said everything that had to be said.

Illumination is the Holy Spirit enlightening readers and hearers of the word so they're able to understand truth that's been given by God. He uses his word as the Holy Spirit guides us into truth. The impartation of truth makes us relevant to scripture rather than the other way around. It shows that God knows our hearts and relates to all our needs.

Interpretation. The Bible is a book which makes it literature, but a very special piece of literature. A careful study of the Bible uses hermeneutics which is the science of interpretation.

There are some guidelines/laws as there are with all literature. The first is to take the Bible in the plain and literal meaning. Bible scholar David L. Cooper said, "When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise."

To do that a historical, grammatical and contextual approach is used. Historical means seeking to understand the time period, the place, culture, setting. Grammatical. Use the rules of grammar to understand words, their meaning and how they interact with other words. Like other forms of literature, the Bible uses poetic expressions and figures of speech. For instance, when Jesus says his followers are "the salt of the earth," he doesn't mean we're the stuff that comes out of a shaker so if the food being cooked needs something, we just rub our arm to add more salt. It's a figurative statement just like "the trees will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12). It's important to determine the genre - poetry, narrative, apocalyptic.

Contextual utilizes the surrounding verses, the thought of the chapter and book to define and clarify the meaning. Also use scripture to interpret scripture.

Interpretation should lead to application – putting the truth into practice. It may be accumulating more knowledge about the holiness of God or acting on the command to love others. Requires discernment.

Some belief systems think each individual person contains what they need for life and their version of godliness. It's up to each person to determine the how, the what, the why of their existence. Others hold to a system of works where people need to perform according to laws and rules. A person's attainment of whatever the promise is depends upon how good they are at keeping the rules.

Every belief system other than Christianity falls short. There's absolutely no need to look anywhere other than the revealed Word of God, the Bible where we find God's grace, his power and ability to deliver what he has promised. Our goal is to be approved workmen who correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).