

Sermon Number 8 in the Series on 2 Peter.

Date: 30th October 2016. Preacher: Rev. Adrian Hallett

Reading 2 Peter Chapter 1:12-21

Title: 'Memory Matters'

Peter's readers are in trouble.....they are struggling and confused. There are these false teachers in the church and they are teaching things that sound OK... that appear at first sight to be “orthodox”, but it’s not what Peter and others have been teaching. They can’t quite make sense of it all – they didn’t know who or what to believe.

So Peter, as Pastor of his flock sets out before them in the first eleven verses the things that he taught them and the things they believed when they first became Christians. He does that, he *has* to do that, because they have this tendency to forget. Some things never change! The tendency to forget – it's always been a problem... its always been a tendency in human nature to forget – even the people of God in the Old Testament and yes, even Christians!

Look back with me for a moment to the people of God in the Old Testament. Take, for example, the book of Deuteronomy – the book which records Moses instructions to the people of God as they prepare to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua.

Moses knows the dangers, both physical and spiritual, that they will have to face. He knows the temptations that will bombard them to compromise their faith. So what does he do? He tells them, over and over again, “*to remember*”. Is that it? Not very exciting is it? Not very dynamic. Surely he could have come up with something more inspirational than that? But, “*remember*”, he says. Sixteen times in that book alone he says “*remember*”. Remember what The Lord your God did to Pharaoh. Remember the Lord your God. Remember how the Lord protected you..... Remember the time of your departure from Egypt (the Passover)...Remember that you were slaves in Egypt.....Remember how you provoked the Lord.....

Remember! Remember! And if that isn’t enough, there are also nine occasions in that same book, where Moses says “*don’t forget*”. Make sure you remember. Don’t forget what you have seen or let them slip from your heart. “*Do not forget the Lord*”. Do not forget the covenant. Twenty five references of either “*remember*” or “*do not forget*”. Nearly one for every chapter of the book. “Remember” says Moses; and why? Because they had this tendency to forget. Note one very important thing. Every exhortation points to what the Lord has done or did for them. Even when they provoked him, they were not encouraged to look to themselves....who they were, what they had done... how good/bad they had been... how weak /strong they were. Nothing 'inward', nothing subjective, but always a looking to God and his actions.... objectively looking go him and all that he had done.

Remember! Memory Matters! We don't live off memories, but our ability to

remember is important so that we can recall his mighty actions.

Peter knows his people have the same tendency to forget. So, he says to them in verse 12, *“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them... I think it right to refresh your memory”*. And he goes on to say, and here we see the love, and the pastoral heart of Peter, even though he knows he is going to die and will not be around in person *“I will make every effort to see that after my departure, you will always be able to remember these things”*.

Remember! Because you tend to forget! You will notice in Peter’s epistle this great emphasis on knowledge – listen whilst I read these verses to you, all stressing the importance of knowledge:

2 Peter 1 verse 2: 2 Peter 1 verse 5: 2 Peter 3 verse 18.

Then in verse 20, he says, *“You must understand”* and he wants to *“stimulate you to wholesome thinking”* chapter 3 vs.1. You have to know certain things – you have to have knowledge.....you have to understand....you have to get your thinking straight.

You see this great emphasis in this epistle (and in all scripture) on the use of our minds....to know... to understand. Why? To guard against error. If you know the truth you can recognise error. If you don’t know the truth, you are a sitting duck. The enemy will pick you off in no time at all. One of the ploys of the enemy is to bypass the mind.....to convince us that it is unscriptural to be a thinking Christian.

A few years ago, when the so called “Toronto Blessing” was around, there was a great emphasis on emptying our minds. Time and time again, I heard this emphasis “empty your mind”.....don’t think about it, just experience it, and just let it happen....very dangerous. How can you “test” the spirits if you don’t use the mind? Our minds are a God given ability to guard against error....to be able to recognise false teaching. That’s why Peter and other New Testament writers give such an emphasis on knowledge.....on knowing....on remembering, warning us not to forget. Our minds are important. Memory matters!

Then there is another aspect to matters to do with our memories. Have you noticed how strange the memory is, in that we have this amazing capacity to remember what we want to forget? Forget what we want to remember?!

We seem to find it so easy to remember hurts we have received....things that have been said and done to us. We want to forget them, but they keep coming back. Or things that we have said and done that we are deeply ashamed of. They keep coming back to haunt us. If only we could forget!

But then, there are the things we want to remember....ought to remember – and our minds are a blank! I struggle with this all the time! And it’s not just because I am getting older! See if you can identify with my experience!

Let me share a little secret with you. It’s a scary thing being a Vicar. Whenever you

lead a home group or a bible study, people look to you for all the answers – people assume that the Vicar knows everything there is to know in the bible. They sit there and wait for those words of wisdom to pour from me. But, I have two problems: No. 1. I don't know everything. No.2. What I have learnt over the years of reading and studying, I forget! Very frustrating! Do you want to know what I did? I went out and bought this N.I.V. study bible. It has loads of footnotes, tells me the background to each book of the bible – it's a mind of information. But, what it does, it stirs up my memory... it refreshes my memory... it kick starts my memory; what I think I have forgotten, suddenly comes back to me – and just for a moment or two, people really do think I know everything!

That's a bit like what Peter is talking about here. He is stirring them up... he's refreshing their memory so that what they know will be actively in their minds in the present. He is not talking of living in the past or living on memories, he is stirring them up to keep "certain perennial principles permanently present". I like that; I wish I could have thought of that! It's a quote from Martin Lloyd-Jones.

That's another reason why it's so important to come to church. We come to worship the Lord...we come to have fellowship together...we value the love and support we give to each other...we come together to pray, but we also meet together for our minds to be "stirred up". That's the role of the pulpit...that's the aim and purpose of preaching, to remind us of the truth of God as it is in Christ.

Sadly, that is not always the case. Like me, I am sure, you will have heard sermons that have a very different content. The Word of God is read. Then follows a sermon that sometimes isn't even based on the Word read. The vicar/minister will then speak about something totally unrelated. Too often we hear the pulpit used to speak out against injustice/oppression/poverty/global warming. Important issues, yes, but they tend to be vague general statements, which everybody agrees with. Like when the Archbishop of Canterbury uses his Christmas address in Canterbury Cathedral, to talk about the evils of war and need for world peace! Who can argue with that? But, these are vague, general statements that don't lead anywhere.

That's not what Peter had in mind. He saw his role and his purpose to remind his readers of the great truths of the Christian faith that they so easily forget.

The role of the church, the role of the preacher, as we follow Peter's model, is to stir up people's minds to realize the wonder and purpose of life....that we didn't evolve over billions of years, that we are a special and unique creation of God. More than that, that God has a plan and purpose for us. Don't forget that. Remember! Peter in verse 13 refers to his body as a *'tent'*. In other words, this is not my permanent dwelling place. I am going to be with the Lord. People have to be reminded that this life is not all there is....that there is a heaven, and yes, there is a hell. Those of us in Christ are going on to a higher and greater destiny. Don't forget that. Remember!

Another priority of the pulpit is to talk of sin. Not very popular! The world doesn't use that word any more. People 'make mistakes'.... people make 'wrong choices'... or they make 'an error of judgement'; they never sin! but the church has to say the reason the world is in the mess that it is, is because of sin. We must point to the rebellion of the human heart and the broken relationship with God. But, we don't stop there, we go on to talk about Gods remedyhis plan of redemption...the Gospel. Don't forget that. Remember!

Then v.18. “...*after my departure*”. What then of our departure? He is referring here to his own “exodus”. Death for the Christian is just passing from the bondage of captivity of Egypt with Canaan. It is like the exodus from oppressions in Egypt. For the Christian, our end is like the folding up of our tent and moving out, an exodus into the Promised Land and eternal kingdom. Don't forget that. Remember! That is what the pulpit is for. That is the role of preaching. To keep in remembrance this precious faith. We speak of the most important thing in the whole world. The Lord Jesus Christ and the importance of knowing Him. As Christians, we have to realise we can't live on memories...we can't live on hopes....but we can live in Him. He is our focus. We are totally dependent on Him. He is our everything. His sacrificial death and his rising again is what we must never forget. His life and death and rising again transforms everything. In Him, we have a true understanding of ourselves, of life, and even death itself. Never forget that. Remember! Memory Matters!