

2 Peter Chapter 1D “Finishing Well”

I remember sitting in a Pastor’s conference about 20 years ago listening to Chuck Smith teach on the subject “Finishing well.” For those of you who may not know, Pastor Chuck was the founder of the Calvary Chapel movement which began in Costa Mesa Calif and eventually spread around the world. Even then, in the 1990’s Chuck was getting up there in years and he was exhorting all of us, not only with his words but also by his example to **“Run the race with endurance.”**

- As a young man I listened to the words of wisdom that were delivered by my aged Pastor but honestly, at that time I was more interested in learning how begin and survive in the ministry than I was in knowing how to finish well.
- As I stand before you today, time has moved on, Pastor Chuck has gone home to be with the Lord and now I am the aging Pastor who is calling you to **“fight the good fight, to finish the race and to keep the faith.”**
- This morning we are going to consider the life and the words of the Apostle Peter as He finishes the course that God had set before Him.

My friends, the Bible is filled with wonderful examples of men and women who ran a good race and finished well. Not only can we read their stories, in many cases we can actually hear their inspiring final words.

- The final words of Moses are recorded for us in Deuteronomy 33
- The final words of Joshua can be found in Joshua 24
- You can turn to Acts 20 if you want to hear the Apostle Paul’s Final Words to the Ephesian Elders. OR, you might turn to 2 Timothy and read his final words to his own dear son in the faith.
 - ALL of these men, at the end of their lives sought to glorify God as they finished their course.

Well, like Moses and Joshua, Peter points his readers to the gracious work of God as he writes his last words to the church.

- This second Epistle is Peter’s Swan Song, It contains his final exhortation to the believers who had been spread throughout region.

In verse 1, Peter reminds us of the gift of faith that has come to all of God’s chosen people through the knowledge of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter reminds us of the great and precious promises that have been granted to all who believe. As amazing as that sounds, he moves on to say that through those promises, we have become partakers in the divine nature.

Peter powerfully exhorts believers to confirm their calling and election by cultivating the good fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

And now in verse 14 Peter informs us that the end of his life is near and this letter will be The final communication that comes from the pen of the big fisherman. You should know, at the time of his writing Peter was in his mid 70's, which was a rich old age for a man of his generation. After all, the average lifespan for a first century man in the Roman Empire was somewhere between the age of 35 – 40.

Listen again to the words of the Apostle.

2 Peter 1:12 **Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.** 13 **I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder,** 14 **since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.** 15 **And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.**

In these 4 verses Peter expresses his Goals in writing this Final letter: He writes:

1. To Remind – them of the truth of the Gospel and the gifts of Grace they received.
2. To Refresh – To stir them up to display the fruit of sanctification.
3. To Recall – his inspired words long after Peter is gone.

Peter writes to REMIND his readers of all of the benefits of God's redeeming grace.

- In light of the frailty of our flesh, the onslaught of false teachings and the alluring distractions of this present world, Peter passionately seeks to remind the church of God's unchanging Word.
- But, it is not just Peter. Throughout the entire Bible, we find God faithfully, continually calling his beloved people to remember His Word.

Moses called to the people of Israel to remember:

De 5:15 **You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.**

- Before leaving Egypt, God instituted the Passover as an annual feast of remembrance so the people would never forget the powerful way that He delivered them from the hand of their enemy.

Ex 12:14 **"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.**

- Again and again God called his people to remember the great love with which He chose them, the words that He spoke to them and the great deeds He did among them.

1 Chronicles 16: 12 **Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered,** 13 **O offspring of Israel his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones!**

- BUT Israel was fleshly and frail just like us, far too often they remembered the things they should have forgotten and they forgot the things they should have remembered.
- They held on to distorted memories of supposed luxuries in Egypt.

Numbers 11:5 **We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, (Free Fish!) the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.**

- In the times of their troubles, the people gave themselves to vain imaginations.
- Exaggerated memories of the fleshly pleasures that were once pursued with no thought to the pain, the bondage, the slavery that accompanied those pleasures.

Today, we might liken this to a drug addict, who was delivered from the bondage of addiction by the saving grace of God in Christ. With great power and mercy God rescued him from his addiction, BUT when the times get tough, rather than trusting in the Lord he sits and ponders with strange, distorted pleasure those early days of sex and drugs and rock-n-roll.

- Somehow he forgot the pain, the poverty and the broken relationships that were brought on by his addiction, neglecting the powerful hand of God that delivered Him from destruction. Oh how easily we forget.

The Prophet Isaiah confronts rebellious Israel saying:

Isaiah 17:10 **For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the Rock of your refuge;**

- And in Psalm 88:12 God calls Israel **“The Land of Forgetfulness.”**

The LAST words that were spoken by the Prophet Malachi, in the final book of the O.T. contain yet another call to remember: Malachi 4: 4 **"Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.** 5 **"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.** 6 **And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."**

- The final words of God in the O.T. include a call to Remember.
- AND then there were 400 years of silence when no prophet spoke in Israel. God was silent until the voice that cried out in the wilderness said:

Matthew 3:2 **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

- Well the foolish heart of man has not changed from the Old Testament to the New. We still remember those things we ought to forget and forget those things we ought to remember.
- And like our O.T. counterparts, we hear the faithful word of the Lord calling us to remember;

On the night that Jesus was betrayed he said to his disciples: John 15: 20 **Remember the word that I said to you:**

Acts 20:35, Paul said to the Ephesian elders, **“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus.”**

Paul writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Ephesian Believers said: Ephesians 2: 12 **Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

- We should never forget the fear and alienation that we once experienced when our sin separated us from God. We **MUST** always remember the rapturous joy of our first love, when Jesus set us free from the prison of Guilt and Shame!

Because Jesus knows the frailty of our flesh and our propensity to forget, on the night that He was betrayed the Lord Jesus instituted a new Feast of Remembrance that we continue even today, we know it as The Lord’s Table.

Lu 22:19 **And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."**

- How very important it is for us to gather round the table of the Lord to remember that He is the bread who came from heaven to give his life a ransom for many.

Moving back to 2 Peter; By the same inspiration in which the prophets of God spoke to His chosen people in the Old Testament, the Apostle Peter speaks to God’s chosen people in the New Testament saying:

2 Peter 1:12 **Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.**

- Peter’s intention in writing this letter was that His readers would be able to remember and apply his teaching long after he had gone on to be with the Lord.
- And today, almost 2000 years after Peter’s death, His words provide a powerful reminder for us to hold us fast to the eternal truth of God in Christ.

The WORD, **“therefore”**(V.12) points us back to all that Peter said in verses 3-11

- IN His great Power, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.
- This wonderful provision of God has come to us through the knowledge, the gracious revelation of Christ who called us to Himself.
- And this revelation of God, this divine call, has brought about a radical transformation in our lives. Now, through our communion with God, we have become participants in, partakers of the divine nature.
- Not only that, but we also have a new desire, we possess a spiritual incentive that drives us to live a life of virtue for the glory of God.

- And Peter tells us that this new life with all of its virtues serves as evidence of our eternal salvation.

Here in verse 12, Peter recognizes the fact that his readers already know this truth, they are firmly established in it, BUT He is going to remind them anyway. WHY?

- Because as believers, we are engaged in an ongoing battle with the world, the flesh and the devil And because false teachers have infiltrated the church, distorting the Gospel, Peter desires to STIR us up, to refresh us by way of reminder. That brings us to our second point.

2. Refresh – So long as he has breath, Peter wants to stir us up.

2 Peter 1: 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

- Peter considers it to be a right, or a “Righteous” thing to stir up, to arouse or awaken his readers from their drowsiness by reminding them of the spiritual truths that he expounded in this letter.
- Like the Prophet Isaiah calling to the People of God

Isaiah 52:1 Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. 2 Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. 3 For thus says the LORD: "You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money."

- The word that Peter uses here in verse 13 is a word that describes vigorous activity, the act of shaking, jostling or prodding someone out of their slumber.
- Like trying to awaken your teenage son for school in the morning. You call him, you shake him you threaten him with cold water... At times you feel like Jesus standing at the tomb of Lazarus, “Come forth!”

I believe that Peter’s passion for spiritual alertness comes from his own experience. In the final week when Jesus walked with his disciples through the streets of Jerusalem, He warned them of the dangers of spiritual lethargy.

Mark 13: 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

35 Therefore stay awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

- And then, within a few short days of this urgent warning, Jesus would walk his disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane.

And with an unusual tone of grief, Jesus reached out to his closest Friends saying, Matthew 26:38 "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

- They watched with sleepy eyes as Jesus fell on his face before the Father, crying out with an urgency they never heard before "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Sadly, the appeal of our Lord to his disciples and the urgency of his cry were insufficient to keep the disciples awake that sorrowful evening. After pleading with the Father, Jesus turned and aroused Peter from his sleep saying: "Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- God knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Ps 103) We labor and grow weary, the demands of life: earning a living and raising a family take a toll on us, physically, mentally and spiritually.
- Exhaustion and prayerlessness leaves us vulnerable to temptation, and like Peter we find ourselves saying and doing things that we deeply regret.

It is possible that the passion of Peter's writing comes from the indelible marks of his own failure to remain awake in the Garden? But I believe there is even more...

Another reason for the urgency in Peter's warning is that he knows the time of his death is quickly approaching. He wrote, (14) since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

- IN this verse, Peter refers to his body as a tent, like those inhabited by the Nomads in the land. HE sees his fleshly body as a temporary dwelling that He would soon or (the word could mean) suddenly put off.
 - This idea of the body as a tent is common in the N.T.

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,

And although Peter is more than 70 years old, the fact that he will soon put off this tent seems to refer to more than just a recognition of his old age.

- He tells us that Jesus actually made it clear to him.

Listen there are all kinds of traditions and tales, fabrication and folklore supposing to explain how Jesus warned Peter of his impending death. They are not helpful, instead they are foolish distractions that are unprofitable to our faith.

- We do know from the Gospel of John that a conversation took place between Peter and the Risen Lord in which Jesus spoke of Peter's death.

John 21: 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." 19 (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

- Most believe these words of Jesus serve as a prediction of Peter's martyrdom.
- By saying "You will stretch out your hands" Jesus warned Peter that He would be executed by means of crucifixion.
- And while I believe that Peter fully understood the horrors of crucifixion and the price that He would inevitably pay for following Jesus, He was convinced that God had truly given him everything he needed for life and godliness in Christ Jesus.

With the end of his life looming Peter seeks to stir up, to arouse or awaken his readers from their drowsiness and He is leaving this writing behind so that they may be able to recall the essential truths of the faith after He is gone.

3 Recall his inspired words long after Peter is gone.

2 Peter 1:15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

- Peter is saying, because I am Not going to be around, I am writing these things down for you so that you will always be able to recall them.
- In writing, his Epistles, in dictating His Gospel to John Mark, Peter is seeking, with all diligence to pass on the truth of Jesus Christ; the record of God's redeeming grace. So that future generations will Remember, so that they will be Refreshed, so that they may Recall the transforming power of the Gospel and live with the blessed assurance of their salvation.

As an eyewitness to the life, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ Peter can speak with clarity, he can speak with authority concerning those things that he has seen with his eyes and heard with his ears.

His hope is that future generations (like us) will be able to live a fruitful Christian life, established in the grace of God, able to fight the good fight of faith, and finish the course!"

It was the testimony of Jesus Christ that sustained Peter to the very end, enabling him to face his own martyrdom with the assurance of a glorious resurrection.

According to Foxes book of martyrs:

- "Jerome tells us that Peter was crucified, his head being down and his feet upward, himself so requiring, because he was (he said) unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as the Lord was."

APPLICATION:

It has been my experience that those who hold fast to the Word of God, those who Remember His precious promises; they are the Saints who grow in strength and increase in fruitfulness throughout their lives.

- Those who remember the Word of the Lord, those who are stirred by the testimony of Scripture, those who recall the marvelous works of God they are the ones who stand firm to the end.

Psalm 19 tells us that the Word of the Lord **revives the soul, making wise the simple, it rejoices the heart and enlightens the eyes.**

- I can tell you with confidence that those who approach their final years, trusting in the Lord with all of their heart; those who have stored up the Word of God in the minds, they are the ones who finish well.

Over the past 24 years I have stood by the bedside of a good number of people as they breathed their last breath.

- Some of their final words have left an indelible impression on my heart.

I remember the words that our dear friend Tom Rivera spoke to me on the last day that He could speak with any measure of clarity. He said with that same glimmer of joy in which he lived his life: **For me to live is Christ and to die is Gain!**

- In the face of great pain, HE held firm to the end.

My dear Friend Lou Pavoni, who I was with to the last beat of his heart said:

1 Corinthians 15:56 **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- To his last breath LOU rejoiced in the grace of God and he faced death with the same assurance in which he lived his life.

Let me leave you this morning with one final exhortation from the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 6: 11 **And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

- After expressing the dangers of abandoning the faith, the author of Hebrews exhorts his readers to display the same Diligence the Same Conviction of hope with which they began their journey through to the end.
- They are to follow the lead of men like Abraham and David, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and remain steadfast in the face of opposition. And in the end all of the promises of God will be fully and finally realized.