

Remember the Gospel

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[0 : 00] I want to call your attention this morning to Q.

Q is a character in all of the James Bond movies, and he starts out his part of the movie with these words.

Now, pay attention, please, 007. Q is the Gadget Man, and he will appear early on in the film as James Bond, 007, is given a mission.

And he perhaps will have James Bond come into his laboratory where he has various gadgets that he's inventing in order to present the latest gadgets to James Bond, or in the instance of the movie Thunderball, he actually goes to the field.

He goes to a tropical environment where James Bond, 007, is greeted by Q with those words, now pay attention, please, 007.

[1 : 09] And he proceeds to show him the number of gadgets that he has that will keep him safe during this mission. A particular gadget that he has in Thunderball is an underwater breathing device.

And he describes the device, but as he's doing so, 007 has to be called back to attention as he begins to fiddle with other gadgets that Q has brought along with him.

Now pay attention, please, 007. Your life may very well depend upon this. He talks about how this underwater breathing device will fit into a cigar tube for placement in a convenient pocket.

James Bond quips, well, that's if you have a convenient pocket for it to fit into. Q looks at him very sternly and he says, I do wish that you would pay attention, 007.

Peter, in his epistle of 2 Peter, his letter to the church that is located primarily in what is today Turkey, he's writing from Rome.

[2 : 25] And as he is writing to these Christians who are facing internal persecutions for their faith, challenges of various new, different, or what we might call deep and mysterious teachings, his challenge to them is to pay attention to the truths that they've already learned, that their very spiritual life depends upon it.

The theme that he has throughout this epistle, as we're going to go through these next four messages, we're going to do this series on the epistle of 2 Peter, is remember.

Today, we're going to look at his emphasis to remember the truth. It's as if he's telling us, the more that you remember what Christ has done for you and is doing for you, then the more your life will reflect Christ in your doing.

The more you recall and remember what Christ has done, that will impact your doing. It will impact your reflection of Christ in your life.

Dick Lucas, the former pastor of St. Helens and Bishopgate, has a more clever way to put it. He says, the only sure way to avoid the dangers in this life to our faith, the danger of wobbling, is to remember.

[4 : 10] If you would avoid the danger of spiritual wobbling in your faith, then remember. What does Peter want us to remember about the truth?

Well, first of all, Peter wants us to remember to remember. In verse 12 here of 2 Peter 1, he says, So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

Remembering to remember is called a reminder. It's like a great yellow sticky note. He's not teaching them a new truth.

But he's saying, your spiritual faith, your spiritual life, your life to reflect Christ, it's absolutely important.

It's crucial. It's of great importance to remember. And a beginning is to remember that I need to remember.

[5 : 26] I need fresh reminders to stay and to remember the very core truths of the Christian life. I need to remember the core of the gospel.

Peter is writing, as we see in verses 13, 14, and 15, with his end in mind.

He says, It's right. It's very proper. It's very timely for me to refresh your memory. Again, I'm speaking this morning to the majority who are Christians.

You're welcome to attend. Indeed, you're in the right place if you're not yet a follower of Jesus Christ. But if you are a Christian today, then Peter is saying to you, it's important, it's critical to continue to refresh your memory with the truths that you already know and are established in. He's looking at the end of his life. It's come into sight. He says, I live in this tent of a body, meaning that it's temporary and it's fragile.

[6 : 47] It's not brick and mortar. And it's soon going to be put aside as somehow the Lord Jesus Christ has made it clear to him. He's looking at his life.

He's writing from Rome under the rule of Nero. Nero will soon begin to put to death, both in the stadiums and then even light them aflame as human torches, Christians, who he will blame for the burning of Rome.

Peter will die in Rome. He will be crucified. Legend has it that he would actually be crucified upside down.

In John's gospel, in chapter 21, Jesus, in meeting privately with Peter, where he invites him, where he invites him to feed his lambs, to feed his church, he tells him, as you follow me, follow me all the way to the end of your life.

And lead my lambs, therefore, all the way to the end of your life. Don't stop. And you'll know the end of your life because at the end of your life, someone will come to you and they will dress you and they will lead you and they will carry you to a place you do not want to go.

[8 : 17] And parenthetically, there in John 21, we read the words that Jesus was referring to his death where Peter would bring him great glory.

Peter connected making Jesus big, bringing glory to Jesus, not only by dying in him, dying with his faith intact, but dying with his faith on his lips to the very end to encourage, to remind, to remember, to strengthen the faith of all those that were under his ministry.

In other words, Peter was a worker who knew, as Charles Wesley would say, that God's workers will come to an end, their death, but God's work will never end.

And Peter here says that he wants to remind them and make every effort to see that after his departure, they'll always be able to remember these things.

Before I leave this point, let me encourage you. Do you have a time on a regular basis where you recite or you're reminded of the core truths of the Christian faith, the gospel.

[9 : 49] Peter is reminding us here that we don't want to simply grow old in our faith, but we want to grow strong in our faith. We want to grow up in our faith, not simply marking time by the passage of time, but our faith is becoming ever richer to us as we plumb its depths.

We rehearse its truths over and over and over again. We don't become, as Scotty Smith, an American pastor once said, we don't become like Cinderella with amnesia.

We're a people who always remember the gospel truths for ourselves, and we always remember the importance of remembering these things for ourselves.

Do you have any reminders? Worship services are a reminder. coming along to prayer meeting and assembly is a reminder. Hymns can be a reminder.

Our regular daily time in God's Word can be a reminder. Jesus on the lips of others, their testimony can be reminders of the faith that we already possess, and those reminders can bring it to fresh life to strengthen us, to literally preserve our faith, reminding us even as we're established in the truth.

[11 : 15] Secondly, he wants us to not only remember to remember, but he wants us to remember what God has done. And he says this in verses 1 through 4.

And notice that he uses the language of gift-giving and gift-receiving. He says in verse 1 that you've received a faith as precious as his.

He's saying in essence, just because I'm acting bishop over all of Christians and over all the churches from Rome, it doesn't mean that I'm any more special than you.

I'm not a Christian because of my spiritual intellect or because of my privileges or station in life. I'm not a Christian and I have a rich faith because I'm even one of the 12 disciples or apostles who's walked and saw Jesus and listened to him teach.

He says, no, my faith in Christ is a gift that I received just as you received. He says in verse 2 that we've received this gift in abundance and the gift that we received is an intimate knowledge of God and Jesus.

[12:33] In verse 3, he says, his divine power has been given to us. And then in verse 4, he says, his very great and precious promises have been given to us.

Peter is saying, remember, remember what God has done for you. He's given you a very precious and great gift even as he has given it to me.

God has done something wonderful. Now, what is this gift that he's given? The gift that he's given here, he puts in terms of power and promises.

The power that he is talking about is the power that comes from God to live the Christian life. We're not Christians because we're good people innately.

We're not Christians because we're naturally religious people. We're not able to love God and love others naturally.

[13:40] He has placed his love in our heart. He has given to us the very person of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit that we now have an ability and a capacity.

There's now room made in our life that we now have a bent to love God and to love others. And again, that not through our own accomplishing that has been given to us by the gospel.

He's given us a power to worship him and to love others. And he's given us everything that we need for our spiritual life that moves us in the direction of godliness, of reflecting Jesus Christ and imitation of him.

But not only that, what else has he given to us? Something else that we need to remember that God has done is he's given us rich promises.

Peter doesn't list out specifically the promises that are ours here in Jesus Christ. But he does tell us what the goals are.

[14:56] The goals of the very promises that have been given to us are twofold. Number one, we are to participate in the divine nature. Now, John Calvin is immensely helpful here in defining this participation in the divine nature.

He says, it is the purpose of the gospel to make us sooner or later like God. Indeed, it is, so to speak, a kind of deification.

Translated, God has given to us promises. They're found in his gospel. The gospel that says, I am a sinner who is forgiven now by a Savior's substitution and his death on the cross so that now I am his child.

And with that promise, I am his child now and forever. And this world is not my home, but I'm made for the family of God to live in the home of God, which is heaven.

And so these are promises galore, and they point to my response. I'm giving these rich promises, and with those rich promises, I now participate in the divine nature so that my life begins to look like a life lived in imitation of my Savior.

[16:33] The promises that have come to me, I am forgiven. The promise of the Holy Spirit operating within, giving me a power now to live the Christian life.

The promise that God always abides with me, the promise of eternal life with him. These promises now drive me on to live toward the goal of participating more and more to be like his divine nature. And then secondly, the goal is to escape the corruption that exist in this world that are caused by evil desires. Evil desires will always be present with us, but when we remember the promises that are ours, when we remember that one of the things that God has done is in Jesus Christ, he has shown us that he will keep these promises.

He will keep his promise to always forgive us. He will keep his promise and his claim that we are always his child. One of the things that these promises do is that they cause evil desires in the flesh to look quite different.

They'll always fascinate us, but they don't hold the same fascination that they did once before. They begin to pale. My greater desire comes after Jesus Christ and to be like him and to walk in fellowship with him, to experience his nearness, to experience his love, to experience him and to abide with him forever.

[18 : 16] Those desires meet the corruption of the world that is winding down to its own demise and death.

Now, Peter's not done here. He says it's important to remember, it's important to remember what God has done. God is at work in you now to will and to move.

He's at work in you by his power to get you home. He's at work in you to live your life in imitation of his son, Jesus Christ.

And he's at work through his rich promises that he's given to you. But there's a response. And in verses 5-9, Peter says, remember what you must do.

Now, immediately, some of you may be troubled by those words to do. What? I've got to do something? I thought that it was 100% God.

[19 : 20] I come as the sinner, unable to do anything, and he brings life by the death on the cross in my place.

All I have to do is receive that, and I'm home free. Peter would say, like Moffat in his commentary, the Christian life must not be an initial spasm of birth followed by chronic inertia.

When my children were growing up, there was one of our doorways, we would carve a little notch or mark with a pen the change in their stature, their height, so that as they were growing up, they would grow taller, and that mark would continue to move up.

If that mark never moved, that meant that they stopped growing, and if they were young in their age, that would mean that there was a problem.

Peter is saying, those of us who now have put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ are not simply hanging on to that faith as we grow old, but with that faith, it is active so that we're growing up.

[20 : 53] The word that he used here is that we are to add on to our faith, that we're to add to it.

Now, add is a theatrical term, which means a theatrical angel or donor, sponsor, or rich benefactor, who generously provides money or a place or resources, props, even actors for the play to go on.

Peter is saying, you're to do like that. you're to bring to your faith, which is rich, established, and strong, but you're to add on to that.

You're to build it out, and it will keep you strong. You're to expand on your faith. Remember that there is a response to your faith.

We don't stay the same as we are in an infantile state. we grow. Now, let me again, once again say, we're not adding to our faith that we've put in Jesus Christ to ensure that we are his, but we are adding on as assurance, assurance that we are his.

[22 : 22] We have a growing confidence as we see the power of God at work in our life as we add, like a building going up, each of these floors in our Christian walk.

It gives me an added confidence that my faith is real, it's vibrant, it's alive, it's growing. Let me, with just a couple of sentences, share with you what Peter points out, are the floor levels that we should be at work to add in our life.

There's seven of them, and I would encourage you, as I tick through these, think of one, think of one of these areas that with a prayer you would like to give personal attention to, to grow in your faith, to add on in your faith, to strengthen or further build out in your Christian life.

First of all, he says we're to add to our faith goodness. Now, goodness means excellence. Some of your Bible is going to have excellence.

Some of your Bible may have virtue, but there's also, the word itself has a meaning for courage. What it looks like is this, to my neighbors, maybe to my roommates, to my family members, to my workmates, my classmates, to all those that are in my sphere of influence that watch my life, I'm going to appear to do good deeds.

[24 : 07] I'm going to appear to be a good person. They may even say that's a good man, that's a good woman, that's a good person, but the note of courage comes in that we communicate I'm not naturally good.

I'm not a good person who is doing goodness for the acclaim of others. My goodness, many of my actions may be even anonymous, but we connect with courage that my good works, my good deeds, my good behavior, the acknowledgement of my being good is traceable back to a good lord, a good king, a good master, a good savior.

Are you known for your goodness? Number two, knowledge. Now, Peter has earlier mentioned that God has given us knowledge, so how can we add it?

Peter says that there's two types of knowledge. The knowledge that God has given to us in Jesus Christ is an intimate knowledge.

He's revealed to us the person and the beauty of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is, we have knowledge of him like a very personal acquaintance.

[25 : 39] It's an intimate knowledge. The knowledge he's talking about here is different. It's gnosis, gnosis. And the word means factual data.

So, Peter is saying this is the kind of knowledge that comes from reading, thinking, discussing, committing things to memory, meditation.

Are you adding, is there an aspect or a time in your week where you're actually adding information about Jesus Christ?

My encouragement, particularly to younger Christians, but I would encourage all of us to always keep a nose in the Gospels.

Always be reading again and again, remembering the life, the death, the resurrection, and the promise of eternal life with him, of Jesus Christ, is then found in each of the four Gospels.

[26 : 47] But always be growing a knowledge of Jesus Christ. Third, self-control. This means the ability to take a grip of oneself. I like looking sometimes to define things by looking at their opposite.

The synonym for self-control is unbridled lust or not being in control of our passions. It looks like this.

Self-control is able to use reason, even to remember what has been done for me, remembering the promises of life forever with God, remembering the things that God has done, and being able to use my reason and even remembering my faith, and I can take charge and rule over my passions.

Or the opposite is true. My passions overcome my reason again and again and again. We're not left to fight this alone.

We have the Holy Spirit. It'll always be a battle. I think about the means that I've seen often enough regarding our life during the restrictions and how we're going to appear when restrictions are finally lifted.

[28 : 12] Therefore, after the lockdown, are you going to appear to be a chunk because you've eaten too much? are you going to appear to be a drunk because you've drunk too much?

Are you going to appear to be a hunk because you've worked out too much? Are you going to appear to be just a lunk because you've done nothing at all? Peter would say, the lockdown and the restrictions can be a good window to observe what measure of mastery and ability to take a grip of myself do I have?

Again, these are things that we're not doing alone, but we're adding to the rich faith that we have already. Fourthly is perseverance. This absolutely is being steadfast in our faith.

And it's not simply surviving, but actually thriving. It's taking the difficulties of life or circumstances that are flung at us and even being able to not simply hunker down and endure, but be able to actually take those things, even the worst events in our life, and capture them and to use them toward my upward journey home, to actually be able to thrive even when circumstances are challenging, are trial filled, difficult, and hard, to actually not only endure, but to be steadfast and to persevere, realizing, again, my faith says that I live in a world that is my Father's and He's sovereignly in control.

Many of these things can be captured even for my good or for His glory. He goes on and He says godliness, which is the Greek term for religion, or we've termed piety.

[30 : 13] Now, this one may cause us to shy away and say, well, I don't necessarily want to be seen as a pious person or godliness. That sounds so puritanical, but the word itself is helpful when defined.

It means that a person who is godly demonstrates both a worship of God, but service for others. It's two directions, not simply one direction.

It's not a person who has separated themselves out and they only worship God, but it's a person who is surrounded by others and they worship God even as they serve others.

Mutual affection is the word that we get Philadelphia from, the city of brotherly love, and it means brotherly kindness, but notice that Peter says it's mutual, that I am made for my fellowship to live even as a brother to you, but you're also, I gather from my community, my own family support, and that I am mutually loved.

There's a mutual love to one another. And then finally on all of this, we're told to crown it with love. This is the gospel.

[31 : 39] To love, to lay my life down even as Christ has laid down my life for one another. To love the Lord my God even as Christ loved the Lord his God.

To see God as my Father, as Christ has seen his Father. You can look at all of these seven characteristics as the personality of Jesus Christ. Peter's saying, now walk and remember to walk in imitation of him.

Peter tells us that if we don't, there are some consequences that we'll be ineffective in our life. It's as if we were never here. We'll be fruitless will be the word that he uses unproductive.

We won't have fruit for ourself that we can draw from and we won't have fruit for others that they could benefit from. It's as if we're short-sighted even moving toward myopia blindness.

That our vision of the future begins to grow dim and we only focus on this world and circumstances around us until eventually we're blind and we're groping in the dark without direction, meaning, or purpose.

[32 : 56] But Peter then gives us the gospel to encourage us. He says, therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager, the opposite of reluctant, to make your calling and election sure.

You are called. You are God's elect. And though it may sound strange, it's true. You could do none of these additions to your spiritual house and most assuredly you are saved.

But there's no fruit. You would be getting in as someone who simply held on to your faith but without any fruitfulness. And you would probably get in by the skin of your teeth as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 3 verses 10 through 15 that we would get in but we would get in trembling and lacking in confidence.

We would get in like the thief on the cross who, yes, he was saved and then he died. He's saying here, though, we should be eager to shore up our faith and to see it continue to grow in confidence. And then he says, there will come a day where you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. That there is a day of celebration.

[34 : 21] There's a day ahead of us. It's promised to us and we cling to that promise. And it's reflected in our life lived for him. And he says, we can expect with all hope that day to be one where our king joins again with his people and a rich celebration of our life lived for him, with him, and by his power.

Amen. May God help us to remember the great gospel.