

Remember to Grow

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[0:00] Please turn with me to the second chapter of the book of Psalms, Psalms chapter 2, and this! can be found on page 536 from your pew bible, Psalms chapter 2.

Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers bend together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles. The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his anger, and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain. I will proclaim the Lord's decree. He said to me, You are my son. Today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth, your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron. You will dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise. Be one, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son, or he'll be angry, and your way will lead to your destruction. For his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

And the New Testament reading is from 2 Peter. You'll find it on page 1225. And we're reading from verses 12 to 21. So, I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them, and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory, as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that it will soon be put aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure, you will always be able to remember these things. For we do not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory, saying, This is my Son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will.

But prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[4:35] Well, as Annette said, we're continuing our series through the second letter of Peter. And I want to begin this morning by asking you, I wonder what the worst thing you've forgotten has ever been.

I think I've told the Wednesday at 2 group this story before, but when our kids were little, Michelle and I arrived home from church and started getting ready for our lunch guests.

I couldn't help thinking that we had forgotten something too. At the time, we had two cars and we had driven home separately so I could pick up the bread rolls. And so I said to Michelle, I've got the rolls for lunch.

You've got the salad. We've got the two kids. And at which point Michelle said, we've got three kids, Andrew. I'd left my son at church. I'd forgotten him. Now, church wasn't too far from where we were living at the time, so I raced back up and went into the hall where he was playing soccer with some other kids.

And I casually walked up to him as though nothing had happened, of course, and said, oh, Tim, it's time to go home. But he came across and said, oh, Dad, I couldn't find you. I thought you forgot me.

[5:39] At which point I said, I think there's a lolly in the car, Tim. And to this day, he still remembers how I did not remember him. But we do all forget things, don't we?

Maybe not children or grandchildren or nieces or nephews, but we forget people's names like the service leader. Yeah, I know it's an ad.

But we forget people's names, don't we? Or we forget what we've learnt in church. For example, I wonder how many here remember what we learnt last week. I won't ask for a show of hands, actually.

Now, of course, some things, it doesn't matter if you forget a great deal. Like if you forget an extra packet of biscuits from the shops, you know, that's no big deal. But if you forget to pick up your grandkids or kids, well, that matters more, doesn't it?

And if you forget to make every effort to grow by God's grace, well, that matters most, says Peter. And so he wants them to remember to do that this week.

[6:41] He wants us to remember these things, which is point one, verse 12. And as I read, I've even highlighted this idea for you of this theme of remembering. And so Peter says, Early church writings tell us that Peter was executed under Nero in about 65 AD.

And so he's likely writing this from prison, soon to be executed, martyred. And so he's literally dying for them to remember. And in verse 15, he's making every effort to see that after his departure, they'll remember.

How? Well, by writing this letter that we're looking at today. But what does he want them to remember? Well, verse 12 says these things.

And he repeats it at the end of verse 15. Do you see? I want you to be able to remember these things. And so the question is, what things? Well, the things he's just talked about.

And we know that because verse 12 begins with the word, So, or therefore, and which points us back to the week before. And so let me remind you of what we saw last week, just briefly.

[8:34] Last week we saw how there were false teachers amongst Peter's readers. And in particular, they denied that Jesus will return in the future to judge. And so they said, it doesn't matter how you live in the present.

And next week in chapter two, we'll see that they live very badly indeed. And so Peter's worried his readers will be carried away by that false teaching and fall from their secure position in Christ.

I remember the summary verses at the end of the letter. He says, And I said last week, the antidote to falling is firstly, verse 17, to guard against the false teachers.

And we'll be reminded of that next week. But secondly, verse 18, it's also to grow in our knowledge or our relationship with Jesus. Because as I said, the more you grow at something, the less likely you are to fail at it or fall from it.

We also saw last week how God's grace has not only given us faith in Jesus, a precious faith, you might remember from verse 1 and 2, but has powerfully also given us everything we need for a godly life.

[10:02] And so Peter says in verse 5, last week, for this very reason, because God has given us everything we need for a godly life, then make every effort to live it.

And not just live it, but grow in it. Notice how he says in the very first line, verse 5, make every effort to add. That's growth language, isn't it? Add to your faith goodness, goodness, knowledge, and so on.

Because if we do, then, if we possess these things in increasing measure, there's growth language again, increasing measure. Verse 8, it will keep us from being unfruitful, unproductive for Jesus.

And verse 9, keep us from being forgetful of Jesus, that he has cleansed us from our past sins. In fact, in verse 10, the last couple of verses from last week, it will also confirm our calling and election that we really do belong to Christ as one of his people.

And will help us not to stumble from Jesus, but receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of Jesus. You see, for Peter, growing by God's grace is really important.

[11:15] In fact, eternity is at stake. Now, that was a very quick recap. If you weren't here last week, then I encourage you to listen to it online. But again, the point is, eternity is at stake.

That's why it's really important for Peter. I used to know a guy from an old church who over time stopped making every effort to grow, stopped reading his Bible, stopped coming to church, and now he no longer calls himself a Christian.

Or when I was a teenager, one of my pastors stopped making every effort to grow in the area of purity. And so he was addicted to pornography, which led to an affair, which meant he left his wife, his children, his church, and now his saviour.

I've even known people who are at our church who have stopped making every effort to grow. Some who we encouraged over many months to return to church after COVID, but they kept saying, no, I'm okay.

This wasn't a health issue. For those who are listening online who can't make it to church, this is a different category. They could make it to church, but they decided, no, it's just, no, I'm enjoying staying home on Sunday mornings.

[12:24] And now I don't know where they are spiritually. Now, of course, God may bring them back, and I pray that he does, because God always keeps those he has chosen.

But one of the ways God keeps us is by helping us to grow in godliness, giving us everything we need, including reminders, like today's passage, that we might keep making every effort to grow by God's grace.

Unless you think you already know this, so don't actually need reminding of this, then notice verse 12 again of our passage, Peter's readers also already knew this.

In fact, it says that they're firmly established in the truth. So they're actually strong Christians. And yet Peter says in verse 13, it is still right to refresh your memory, even though you know it, even though you're firmly established in the truth of it.

I was at a clergy conference once, and the bishop prayed that we might discover something new and fresh from the Bible today. And I wondered, you know, whether that was a right thing to pray.

[13:41] Yes, it is true that, you know, we may sometimes discover new things we haven't learnt or noticed before. After all, the Bible is rich, and there's lots to learn.

But if you came to church and learned the same thing, is that actually a bad thing? Peter actually says no. In fact, my job is not to teach you new things, a new gospel, but to remind you of the same things, the same gospel.

Because we all forget things, don't we? And none of us are completely godly yet, are we? And so we can all keep being reminded to grow, can't we?

Peter is dying to remind them and us of what we already know, so that we won't miss out on that rich welcome into Christ's eternal kingdom. That welcome we'll receive the moment our bodies die and our souls live on in heaven, and that welcome into the new creation when Jesus returns and raises our bodies, gives us a new body for life in a new creation.

For despite what the false teachers say, Jesus really will return to bring it all about. And we have evidence for it. So point to verse 16.

[14:57] Peter goes on to say, For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, there's the second coming, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Peter says, When he and the other apostles told them about Christ's return, they weren't making it up. They weren't following cleverly devised stories. Rather, they were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty.

They glimpsed his glory, a glory he'd have to return in order to show everybody. But when did they glimpse it? Well, verse 17.

I wonder if you can guess what event on the mountain that Peter is referring to.

I'll give you a hint. It starts with trans, ends with figuration. You know, remember when Peter, James and John went up the mountain and saw Jesus' figure transformed? Christ's face became like the blazing sun.

[16:12] His clothes dazzling white. And Peter got a sneak peek of Christ's true glory, didn't he? And since the world hasn't seen it, then Jesus will have to return to reveal it.

And Peter just didn't see Christ's glory. He also heard it from God. When God said, This is my son whom I love. With him I am well pleased.

Now, this not only identifies Jesus as God the Son, you know, the second person of the Trinity, but also the Son of God who is the Messiah, the Christ, the King who will return to put this world right.

We heard in our first reading from Psalm 2 this idea. So in Psalm 2, God begins by, well, halfway through the Psalm, he says, I have installed my King, my Messiah, Christ, on Zion, my holy hill.

And then the King says, I will proclaim the Lord's decree. God said to me, You are my son. Today I have become your father.

[17:19] You see, the King, every King, in fact, from King David onwards, was known as a son of God, like this verse indicates. And then the King goes on to say, God said to him, Ask me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

You will break them with a rod of iron. You will dash them to pieces like pottery. Blessed are all, as the Psalm finishes, who take refuge in the King.

You see, the King is the Son of God, who will rule the nations as his possession. Judge those who've rebelled against him, but bless those who take refuge in him.

And so when God calls Jesus his son at the transfiguration, he's not just saying he's God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. He's also saying Jesus is the King, the Son of God, who will return to put this world right, who, as we said in our creed a moment ago, will return in glory to judge the living and the dead.

In fact, in the Gospels, the transfiguration is always associated with the return of Jesus. And so although Peter didn't quite understand it at the time, he now looks back and remembers that what he saw and heard was a sneak peek of the future.

[18:42] A future where Jesus will return so every eye will see his true glory, every knee will bow before him as Lord, and every tongue confess him, the King who rules the world.

As some of you know, I love a lamb roast, and occasionally Michelle cooks one for me in the slow cooker, so the meat just falls off the bone, you know, and so I'm getting hungry now.

Anyway, and so when I get home and smell the aroma of rosemary and garlic, and when I look through the glass lid of the slow cooker and see the lamb roasting, I get a sneak peek of what's in my future.

A lamb roast dinner. Well, when Peter saw and heard the glory of Jesus, he got a sneak peek into the world's future.

The return of Jesus in glory to judge the living and the dead, to put this world right and bless those who take refuge in him. And so he knows Jesus' return is certain, you see.

[19:48] And for us, we have his eyewitness and earwitness testimony in our hands, don't we? And so we can know it's certain too. In fact, we know his testimony is reliable because Peter is about to die for it.

Remember, he's about to be martyred for Jesus. And so if Peter was not certain Jesus would return in the future, you know, make it all worth it, then don't you think he'd put up his hand to Nero and go, I'm just changed my mind now.

You know, I decided not to follow Jesus. You don't have to kill me. He would have, wouldn't he? And so the very fact that he dies for this tells us that his eyewitness testimony is reliable, which then means we too can know that Christ's return is certain.

Jesus' return is certain for Peter glimpsed it and what's more, God's word promised it. Verse 19. He says, we also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Are the words completely reliable or probably better translated as made more certain? That is, the testimony, the eyewitness testimony of the apostles makes what was promised in the Old Testament even more certain because their testimony backs it up.

[21:15] For example, what Peter saw and heard at the transfiguration makes Psalm 2 more certain, doesn't it? Because he heard the voice from heaven confirm Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah.

Of course, what the prophets promised in the Old Testament was already reliable, wasn't it? Because it wasn't just the word of the prophet, it was the word of God. Verse 20. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

You see, Peter is saying that Scripture is ultimately not the word of the prophet, but the word of God, which means God has promised a day of the Lord when the king will return to judge and bless.

And so Jesus' return really is certain. Peter glimpsed it and God himself promised it. And so there really will be a rich welcome and a new creation for us.

[22:25] So what does all this mean for us? Point three. Well, firstly, I think we're to pay attention to God's word. I mean, that's what verse 19 said. Remember verse 19?

We would do well to pay attention to it. And that means reading it, digesting it, and living it out. In fact, in the Anglican prayer book, there are colleagues or prayers each week and the prayer for this week just so happened to be on this very theme.

It says, Blessed Lord, you have caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

And by inwardly digesting them, it means living it out. For as Scripture says, it is like a light shining in a dark place, helping us to see how to live.

It's a light that helps us to know peace in this world where there's less and less peace, it seems. It's a light that gives us hope in this world that seems to have less and less hope.

[23:37] And it's a light that helps us to know how to live in this world which is so confused about how to live. And so we're to keep paying attention to Scripture until the day dawns, that is, until the day of Christ's return and our hearts rejoice.

But Peter wants us to particularly pay attention to Scripture so that we'll know Christ's return is certain, which is the second application.

That Jesus really will return in glory to rule the nations as his possession, judge those who've rebelled against him, but bless those who take refuge in him. And so at this point I need to ask, have you taken refuge in Jesus by believing in him?

Or are you continuing to rebel against him? It's the difference between facing eternal life or eternal judgment. If you want to believe in Jesus or know a bit more about Jesus and you're here just exploring the faith today, then I'd love to speak to you after the service or please grab any other person you've seen up the front today and ask them.

We'd love to help you. And for us who do believe in him, then do we live like his return is certain? Do we seek to live for the world to come?

[24:56] Do we keep praying for those who don't yet know Jesus that they might take refuge in him before he returns? I was reading a bio of a guy called Ben last week.

His bio says, Ben also believes that two minutes in glory will be far more satisfying than 80 years of the best pleasures this world has to offer. Here is someone who believes Christ's return is so certain that he wants to live for the world to come.

And he's not going to make it his aim to get everything from this world. He's happy to miss out on things in this world for Jesus because he believes that only two minutes in glory will be far better.

Do we live like Christ's return is certain? And third, we're to remember to make every effort to grow by grace. Because if Christ's return is certain, then it will be worth it, won't it?

And we don't want to miss out on it, do we? And so we're to grow that we won't be carried away by any false teaching in our world and fall from Christ, but receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of Christ.

[26:07] And at the moment our bodies die so that our souls will be welcomed by Christ into heaven. And then when he does return, we'll be raised with a new body to enjoy life in a new creation.

We're to keep growing because this is a reality and we don't want to miss out on it. And so in a sense this third application is the same application as last week to grow by God's grace.

But this week Peter is desperate that his readers remember it and to practice it. And so for example, last week I showed you this slide and I suggested we pick one thing that you could pray about during the week, that you could make every effort to grow in it more.

And we talked a little bit about those things. And so here's the question, did you remember to do that last week? Or did we forget? It's so easy to forget, isn't it?

I remember conducting a wedding where the best man forgot the rings. And so we had to borrow someone else's ring. I think it was the bride's sister from memory.

[27:15] Another guy forgot the day of his wedding and booked a camping trip with his mates. He remembered before the actual day. We invited some friends over for lunch but they forgot to turn up.

They're not our friends anymore. No. The point is, it's easy to forget, right? But Peter says don't forget this thing. To make every effort to grow as Christians, using what God has graciously given us.

For despite what the false teachers or what our world says, Jesus really will return. And so there really will be a rich welcome for us who keep trusting in him. So let's pray that we will keep doing that.

Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we thank you that the return of Christ is certain, which means life after death in your kingdom is certain.

And so until that day, help us, we pray, to keep remembering to make every effort to grow as Christians, relying on all that you've graciously given us, whether it's your word, your spirit, your church, that we may not stumble, but be welcomed into your eternal kingdom.

[28:32] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.