Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Back when our children were still at home, when Mrs H and I went out, we would leave the children to look after themselves with the older one or ones in charge. And every time we did this, we would talk to them and remind them of the rules. This is what you are allowed to eat and drink, this is how much TV you can watch, older sister will put little sister to bed, she will read only *one* book, and this is the time that each child has to go to bed, etc. And then we would warn them that if this did not happen, there would be consequences. And I expect that all you parents do this; it is the ‘pre-departure reminder.’ And we received it from our parents too. So, why is it necessary? Why did we need it and why do our children need it? And why does it need to be repeated every time we go out? Well, it is because we all quickly forget what we are supposed to do. And doing what we are not supposed to do is much easier than doing what we are supposed to do. So, someone wants two drinks instead of one, someone wants a bit more TV, someone wants two books instead of one, waaah! Or someone wants to stay up later than they are supposed to. Or little sister tells old sister that *she is not the boss*. Waaah! And we laugh at all this because we have all done these things, and all our children do these things. It is why parents always have to give a pre-departure reminder.

Well, when it comes to adults who profess faith, it would appear that we also need pre-departure reminders. And I say this because there are many of them in the Bible. We read one, earlier, in Deuteronomy, as Moses, right before he died, reminded the people of Israel of their duty to obey the law. And Joshua did this right before he died, also. And coming into the New Testament, John 13-17 is Jesus’ ‘pre-departure reminder’ to His disciples. Just one day before He died, He carefully and patiently instructed and warned His disciples. Another example is Paul in Acts 20. Having summoned the elders of the church in Ephesus and told them that this would be the last time they saw each other, he reminded them of their duties and about the sorts of bad-behaviour they could expect to see after he left.

And our passage today is **Peter’s pre-departure reminder**. In verses 12 and 13, he twice talks about giving his readers a “**reminder**.” And the words about Peter’s body in verses 13&14 tell us that the Lord had somehow revealed to Peter that he was soon to die. So, there was an urgency to this reminder. If it was the last thing he did, Peter was determined to write this letter. And because it is part of Scripture, we do well to give these words our full attention. And we will see why as we consider this pre-departure reminder under three headings: the **Function** of the Reminder, the **Facts** Behind the Reminder, and the **Foundation** for the Reminder.

Now, I was originally hoping to make this one sermon. But that would have meant leaving out a lot of points that would be helpful for us to consider along the way. So, we will consider this passage over two Sundays. Today we will look at the function of the reminder, and then, God willing, we will consider the facts behind the reminder and the foundation for the reminder next Sunday.

1. So, our focus today is verse 12-15 and the **Function** of the Reminder. And Peter identifies three parts to the function. And they will be our three points today.
   1. And we see the first in verse 12 where Peter refers to believers as being “***established in the truth***.”
      1. And we have spoken about this several times already in earlier sermons. A key theme of this letter is the importance of being established or strengthened or stable or not able to fall. And Peter understood that it was his calling as an apostle to teach believers so that they would be “*established in the truth*.”
         1. You might remember that just before Jesus warned Peter that he was going to deny him three times, He said to Peter, “*Behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have [repented and been restored], strengthen your brothers*.” And the Greek word translated there as “*strengthen*” is the same word translated here as “*established*.” So, with this letter, Peter was doing what the Lord had called him to do by declaring the truth.
      2. Now, we will see next Sunday that the specific issue in connection with the truth that Peter needed to address was the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. But **Psalm 119:160** says, “*The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever*.” And in **John 17:17**, Jesus prayed to His Father, concerning all those who belong to Him, “*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth*.” The Bible, because it is the word of God, is the truth. Whether it is speaking about creation, miracles, the resurrection, the Second Coming, that God will bring us to heaven, or God’s laws about male and female or marriage or sexual immorality or abortion, **Isaiah 40:8** says, “*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever*.” We have in this book the truth. And it is only as we believe what the Bible teaches that we have an anchor for faith, and are able to recognizes false teaching and to stand firm against it.
         1. And it is timely for us to be reminded of this because, as we often note, there is a growing hatred in the world for what the Bible teaches.
            1. I saw a university examination paper the other day that had a question. And following the question, in brackets, it said words to the effect that any answer that promoted the biblical view would be an automatic fail. And this is in a university, where academic inquiry is supposed to be paramount!
            2. But we may face losing our job or losing government funding or losing various other freedoms if we stand for bible truth. And pretty much everyone else, including many who claim to be Christians, will cave-in and will go along with the crowd. It is only if we believe that what the Bible teaches is the truth that we will be established.
      3. Now, notice in verse 12 that Peter described the believers he originally wrote to as already “*established in the truth*.” Peter had previously taught them the truth about the Second Coming and about other aspects of the person and work of Christ and correct doctrine and godly living. So, they knew the truth. But in **1 Timothy 1**, Paul instructed Timothy to keep preaching the word, regularly and faithfully, so that he and his hearers would *hold* the faith and not be like two men in the congregation who had *made* *shipwreck* of their faith. You see, whether it be because of false teachers or our own spiritual laziness, we can forget the truth and embrace error or ungodliness.
         1. For example, I know a family who grew up in one of our churches, who started listening to a particular preacher on Youtube who had a whole theology about how Christians need to use one particular Jewish name to speak about Jesus, and they still have to do Christian versions of all the Old Testament ceremonies and feasts, and Jesus will come back and rule in Jerusalem, and on it went. So, they resigned their membership and wrote to the whole congregation that they had found *the* way. And I don’t say this in any way to despise that family; I say this to illustrate why we all need regular reminders of the truth.
         2. I may have already mentioned this, but I was recently reading about revival. And revival is when a whole lot of people join the church at one time. And one theologian said, “A revival of the kind of Christianity which we have had in [the West] in the last fifty years would be the greatest tragedy of this century, a tragedy which would take the church a hundred years to get over.” And he said this because there is so much wrong teaching and worship practices in the wider church today.
            1. What I am about to say is not meant in any way to be arrogant or disdainful or self-congratulatory, because we have our own weaknesses and blindspots. OK? But I could tell you about several people who have started worshipping with us in the last couple of years, who were previously part of other churches. They genuinely love the Lord and actively participated and served in their previous churches. But for a variety of reasons, they came here and realized that they were not being taught in their previous congregations. They were not growing in the knowledge of Jesus. And through the teaching of the Word, they came to see that there was theological and worship and moral error in their previous congregations.
            2. And we have seen the same thing happen in previous sister denominations. This is a very real danger. It could happen here if we put the Bible away and make it all about mindfulness or happy marriages or social justice or being purpose driven or living our best life now or minimizing sin and hell, etc, or making worship more entertaining and/or emotional.
         3. And this is one reason why our churches are required to do what is called confessional preaching in one service each Sunday. You see, confessional preaching forces preachers like me to cover all the doctrines and areas of Christian living, over and over again, instead of me only preaching on my favourite doctrines or areas of Christian living. And if you are not regularly coming to our afternoon services, this is what you are missing.
      4. The Bible is the Word of Christ. It is where we see His person and work. It is where we hear His promises. It is where we hear His commands. And we need regular reminders of the truth, so that we would remain established in it.
   2. But we find the second part of the function of Peter’s pre-departure reminder in verse 13, where Peter says that he wanted to “***stir [his readers] up*** *by way of reminder*.”
      1. In the previous section of verses 5-11, Peter called on believers to make every effort to supplement their faith with virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. And he said in verse 8 that it is only if these qualities are ours “*and are increasing*” that we are kept from being “*ineffective and unfruitful*.” And verse 12 states that it is these qualities that Peter intended always to remind his hearers of. And then he explains in verse 13 that this was to stir us up.
      2. Well, the Greek word translated as ‘to stir up,’ literally means to **wake up**. And we all know the difference between being asleep and awake. Just try and tell someone who is asleep to do anything. It does not work, does it.
         1. And Peter knew this from bitter experience. On the night of Jesus’ arrest, He was with His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. And He urged them to stay awake and pray and be alert. But do you boys and girls remember what the disciples were doing when Jesus came back to them? He “*found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy*.” And it was not long after that that Peter, having vehemently declared that though everyone else deny Him, He, Peter, would not, did deny Him, three times.
         2. So, again, with these words, Peter was acknowledging His own failure, and holding Himself before his readers as a bad example.
      3. But Peter’s example reveals that more is in view here than just being awake. It also means being **alert**, **having your mind switched on**, **being ready for action**.
         1. Back in **1 Peter 5:8**, Peter called on believers to “*be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*.” So, Peter knew the danger of being a drowsy, un-alert Christian. You are easy prey for the devil and temptation and false teachers.
         2. But on the plus side, those who out of love for Christ and thankfulness for every blessing, make every effort to practice the qualities described in verses 5-7, will be more alert to the strategies of the devil, and to temptation, and able to recognize and stand firm against false teaching.
      4. I have always enjoyed watching movies with **submarines** in them. I find the whole idea of living in a submarine fascinating and frightening! But if you have watched a submarine movie, you will know that the crew practices their safety and torpedo launch and evasion and fire and flooding procedures, over and over again. And they do this so that when the real thing happens, they instinctively know what to do.
         1. Well, this is part of the function of sermons and Bible studies. They stir us up to action. They provoke us to holiness. They promote obedience. They spur us on to practice these qualities and to grow in them.
      5. Now, perhaps you are hearing all this and thinking that it sounds very do this and do that, and if you work hard enough then all will be well. And perhaps you are not doing so good – your faith is weak, or you have guilt or doubt. Well, we simply cannot ignore the language of Scripture. We have commands here to make every effort and to be diligent and to practice these qualities. We can’t give ourselves an excuse by saying it’s all about Jesus, so I don’t have to try. But let me remind you again of the words of **Galatians 2:20**: “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*.” So, don’t put your faith in your own efforts, but in Christ, and know that all your efforts are actually Him at work in you, by His Spirit.
   3. And that brings us to the third and final part of the function of this pre-departure reminder, which is in verse 15. That is where Peter says that he was “*mak[ing] every effort [to give this reminder] so that after [his] departure [believers]* ***may be able at any time to recall these things***.”
      1. And this point feeds into what we will look more closely at next week, in connection with verses 16-21. For these words have to do with Peter committing these words to paper and them becoming a part of Scripture. As we noted earlier, Peter knew that he would die soon. So, he would no longer be around to personally teach believes. And this is why he was eager to put his teaching down on paper, so that believers could refer to it again and again.
         1. Now, many Bible scholars believe that Peter may also have had the **Gospel of Mark** in view here. And that is because it is generally believed that Mark became a kind of disciple of Peter, and that Peter supplied him with the material for his Gospel. In fact, a man named Papias, who was born in AD 70, wrote that Peter worked closely with Mark to make sure that he wrote accurately. And many of the other early church fathers say this about Peter and Mark’s Gospel also.
         2. So, Peter wanted believers to have a reliable and trustworthy eye-witness account of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, as well as what He taught and promised, and Peter’s own apostolic preaching and teaching, as an aid to faith.
         3. And you and I still benefit from this desire of Peter today! It’s amazing, isn’t it! We can read a Gospel account that he most probably oversaw and two of his letters any time we like. And we won’t go into the incredible details of copying and translation and the inspiration and supervision of the Holy Spirit today, but we can be certain that the words we read are the words he wrote.
      2. In our earlier reading from **Deuteronomy 31**, the Lord said to the people of Israel, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*.” And those words are quoted in **Hebrews 13**, which is another of the Bible’s many reminder passages. We read, “*Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers … Remember those who are in prison … and those who are mistreated … Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*”
         1. Do you have this confidence? Is the Lord your helper? Is He the rock of your salvation? Do you know for sure that He will never leave you nor forsake you? Well, it all comes down to the Bible, doesn’t it. Your feelings will ebb and flow, but if you know and believe that the Bible is the Word of God; that in it you have been given the truth about God and creation and salvation in Jesus, and about the right way to live, then you have a solid foundation for faith and hope and love.
         2. And you will plan to be here to hear the reading and preaching of the Word, and you will make every effort to be part of a regular Bible study, and you will ask others for tips on how to do your personal Bible reading and meditation at home.
         3. And you will do this to remain established in the truth of Christ, and to be stirred up to practice the qualities listed in verses 5-7. For, as we saw last week from verse 11, “*in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.” Amen.

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for providing us with Peter’s Pre-departure reminder in Scripture. Help us to give ourselves, fully, to the task of regularly remembering Christ and His commandments. This we ask in His Name, Amen*.