

2Peter 11-12-09a

This is Friday, the 9th of December, 2011. We are in the book of 2nd Peter and we're at chapter 3. We'll go to the Lord in prayer and then begin. Father, we are reminded here by the Apostle Peter of how important it is to remember the truth of your word and what a privilege it is for us to assemble and to spend time thinking about it, studying it together, meditating on it and letting it sink into our souls where your Holy Spirit can make it perspicacious, can make it pertinent and applicable in our particular circumstances.

We thank you for all of the providences and graces that have brought us to this point. We know that the time is short and in the allotment that remains to us, we pray that the things we study tonight will be meaningful and will motivate us and equip us to carry out all those things that you have left us in this world to perform. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

We have covered the first two of the three chapters of this letter and I think if you scan back through them, you will see that Peter is very emphatic about the word of God being fresh in our minds. He begins the letter in 1.2, Grace and peace be multiplied to you in or by means of knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. And it really tells us the direction that this letter is going to take.

Our grace, our peace is multiplied by means of our knowledge, what we know. It's an easy thing to talk about Bible knowledge. We play Bible trivia from time to time, especially at the holidays.

Got that little deck of cards and what book is the story of Ehud found in and various things. What was Noah's wife's name? Things of that ilk. See if anybody will answer Joan of Arc.

When it says knowledge, it's not just the skeletal outline of the stories or the narratives. It's not just the main content of the various books. This grace and peace is multiplied to us as this becomes a part of the fabric of our thinking.

It's one thing to know something academically. It's something to know it as a feature of life. When you know what can happen if you're not careful on the highway, it motivates you to be a better driver, to be cautious, to be alert, to be watchful of the unpredictable actions of other drivers because you know what can happen.

There's hardly a week that goes by that you don't hear or see some terrible traffic accident. So that knowledge is with us. It colors our behavior when it comes to driving cars.

Now knowledge of how things can go wrong in traffic doesn't necessarily come into play when you're doing the laundry or when you're writing a paper or a letter or when you're engaged in other activities. Knowledge bears on different aspects of life. I've got computer knowledge, but it doesn't help me when I'm putting in a floor.

I've got flooring knowledge, but it doesn't help me when I'm working on a computer. I've got English knowledge that does help me when I'm working in Greek. So different kinds of knowledge have applicability and a degree of overspray or of pertinence to things beyond their immediate subject.

This is why we can't just get a basic course in Bible and then stop looking at the Word of God because, well, you can, but the Holy Spirit is going to have such a limited vocabulary. People say, well, I don't really sense the reality of God. I don't see where there's anything particularly spiritual going on in life.

I feel like I'm just another American or another person in whatever country I live in just going about my business. Well, of course not. God can't speak effectively to us in terms of guidance and insight if we don't give Him the vocabulary.

I can't be a good driver if I've never really spent any time looking at what happens on the highway or how the car works. The more knowledge I have, the more effective and deft I'm going to be at whatever I'm trying to do. So even though sometimes the study of the Word of God seems off point, why am I in Isaiah looking at the prophecies that were delivered to people in post-exilic days coming back to the land? How does that apply to me? I'm here in a highly technological age.

I'm not coming back from any kind of exile. How would it apply? Well, there is this unseen effect where we find out when God the Holy Spirit brings it to our minds and we say, oh, I see, I'm moving into an unfamiliar situation here. These people are returning to a land that they've only heard about.

Their parents or grandparents told them about the land of Israel. They have grown up in Babylon or in the Medo-Persian Empire, and now they're going back. This would be like a bunch of immigrants of Irish extraction that have been here for a couple of generations saying, well, we're going back to Ireland.

Let's all pack up and we're moving to Dublin. Well, okay, they've got a lot of hearsay and a lot of family stories and whatnot, but to go back and live there and to try to catch up with what the situation is, we encounter situations like this all the time. We go into unfamiliar circumstances.

Well, truths, just as an example, out of the book of Isaiah in these chapters 60 through 66 are pertinent. They pertain. What is the nature of God's guidance? What is the nature of his provision? What sort of promises does he give to people that he is watching over and caring for? You say, well, there's nothing in there about a postmodern society with technology and iPads and contraception and all of these controversies in politics and economic global meltdowns and whatnot.

I don't see anything in the Bible about that. Many people don't see anything in the Bible about that because they have not spent the time gathering line upon line, line upon line, precept upon

precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. The synthesis and the bearing that those different pieces of information have, these truths from the Bible have, is accomplished in our souls by God the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, as you know, is so widely misunderstood in our day. What is his actual ministry? Jesus said, I'm leaving, I'm sending the Spirit, he will lead you into all truth. It isn't a hand-flapping holy glow, it's not an ecstatic experience, it's not gibbering away in some known or unknown tongue.

It is practical synthesis of biblical truth in terms of application to my present circumstance. The most common thing you hear from your atheists and your agnostics and your ne'er-do-wells who want to throw rocks at the Bible is, why are you studying a book of 2,000, 3,000 year old myths when not one percent of the information available today was even known? You've got a bunch of goat herds and rock throwers out there writing these ancient myths and you think this has some pertinence to today. Well, of course they're not going to understand because they can't even begin to enter into the things that we see on a daily basis, where these divinely inspired truths that are contained in this book are relevant, they are pertinent, they do comfort, strengthen, encourage, guide, sustain, inspire, and the reason they do is that they are available.

We have collected them, we have accumulated them, we have stored them away, and it's like Jesus said about a good teacher, a good teacher can bring out of his storehouse of information things both new and old. And people of the secular stripe are very ready to follow H. Wayne Dyer or L. Ron Hubbard or any one of these guys that has an initial for a first name, that write these philosophical books and say, oh, let's get the wisdom of the ancients and let's philosophize, well, if you're ready to accept philosophy, if you're ready to accept abstractions, then what's your problem with people who recognize that there are more fundamental and divinely inspired truths that are in that same category, that are metaphysical, that are beyond the immediate? Well, that's kind of an abstract beginning to Peter's letter, but in the first two chapters here, Peter has said, you've got to pay attention to what you believe, to what you listen to, to what you let in through the ear gate and the eye gate of your mind. You need to pay attention to your fundamental assumptions, to what you treat as true.

What do you take for granted as factual? Peter says you've got to watch out, because it is knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord that as Christians is essential to our well-being. Now, if somebody doesn't want to be a Christian, if they don't want eternal relationship with God, if they are content to be like the grass of the field that springs up in the early morning dew and basks in the sun and withers and shrivels away to nothingness, if that's all you're interested in in life, God says, fine, you choose it, you got it, and those people aren't going to have eternal life. They live for the moment, they die for the moment, and they're gone forever.

The grass withers, the flower fades, and God has done such a beautiful job of giving us the option. He is only interested in granting eternal life to those who are interested in experiencing

eternal life with Him. If you don't like God, don't like the concept of God, or kind of put out and impatient with the whole notion of having to be subservient or doing any sort of obeisance or having any kind of gratitude for life or breath or anything, well, fine.

You strut and fret your hour on the stage, sound and fury signifying nothing, and the curtain comes down and you're gone. But if we recognize what a tremendous gift life is, consciousness is, and the recognition of who God is, how gracious and how fantastically intelligent and powerful He is, and what a wonderful thing to be His creation and to be related to Him and to move into the eternal future with Him, if we value that and care about it, God says, I can start you on the road to understanding. I will be with you.

I will make your life now meaningful, and it will prepare you for life in the future that's beyond what you can ask or think. So what we decide to believe is important, and the worst thing that can happen is to say, yes, I acknowledge what I know in my heart, that there is a God, that there is an eternity and a metaphysical reality beyond the material and the secular and the momentary and I'm not just dead meat when I die, and the universe really did have purpose when it originated. If I understand these things, how tragic to start down a road of understanding, to start down a road of relationship with God and preparation for the eternal future, because this earthly life is just a blink of an eye, not even that, compared to eternity, but how tragic to begin down that road and then to be deflected, to be deceived, to be big-dealed and horn-swoggled and snake-oiled out of preparation and understanding of why we're here and where we're going.

And Peter says, I am about to leave, and I want to remind you how important it is to lay hold of the truth and don't let go. Don't let anyone pry it out of your hand. Don't let anybody do a bait and switch.

Verse 12, chapter 1, I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. It's not enough to know and be established in the present. Peter says, I want to warn you that you are not deflected, that you're not diverted, that you're not deceived, because just having it and knowing in the present, that's fine, but that's no guarantee for the future.

You've got to be alert. Satan roams the earth like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. You don't start out being devoured.

You're like a happy-go-lucky African personage going down a little jungle trail, whistling a tune, carrying your little leather satchel with some vegetable lunch in it, and all of a sudden, out of the branches of a low-hanging tree comes a predator, and now you're gone because you weren't alert. You weren't watchful. You didn't have any care for what might happen.

It is not enough. This is a point to remember. It is not enough to be presently knowledgeable and to be presently established.

That's great, but it's not enough. We have got to take steps to ensure that we remain knowledgeable and that we remain established. You can't take it for granted that because you know and are firmly rooted now, that you're always going to be.

People who are getting it right and doing it right are targets for those who want to try to blunt the effectiveness of those who are living for God. Don't have to worry about the ones that are already off in the weeds. Let them continue to wander in the weeds.

If you're doing the right thing, understanding the right truths, making a difference in the unseen conflict, you're going to be a target. It's not going to be an overt, somebody's not going to knock on the door, you open it up, here's somebody with a big hat that says, Spirit of Antichrist, let me come in and divert you from the path. It's going to be subtle.

It's going to be deceptive. Peter says, I want to put you in mind of these things. I think it is right, verse 13, as long as I am in this tent, as long as I am still alive, to stir you up by reminding you.

Make a note of that phrase, to stir you up by reminding you. We have the identical phrase in chapter 3. And you remember this last chapter 2 that we just finished covering, it's all about what a false teacher will do, how to identify them, what their characteristics are, what the nature of their message is, what the effect of their message is, what their judgment and their fate is for doing this, right? Peter says there were false prophets in the old days, there will be false teachers in the future. So when we get to chapter 3, look at how it begins, Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle, in both of which I do what? Stir up your pure minds by way of reminder.

Same thing we just read back in chapter 1, stir you up by way of reminder. You say, well, I don't need reminding. Yes, you do.

This is why God has put the Apostle Peter here, to tell us twice, I'm reminding you, I'm reminding you. Sometimes you get annoyed if you've already remembered a thing and somebody reminds you, you think, you think there's something wrong with me, I can't remember my stuff? It's a little bit irritating. Why are you reminding me? I already know that.

Peter has no compunctions, he has no hesitation, he doesn't care if we remember or not. He says, as long as I'm in this tent, I'm going to stir you up and remind you. Now why would somebody remind you even though they might be pretty sure that you already remember? Would this be a minor thing or a major thing? Let's say you're a midshipman and you're on liberty and your Navy ship is going to be pulling out of port promptly at 0800 the following morning.

And if you miss the ship leaving, you can't get on. Your whole cruise is done for. You're going to be in 17 different kinds of hot water.

So do you probably remember that the ship is going to pull out at 0800? Yes. Is somebody likely to remind you that the ship is pulling out at 0800? Of course they are because it's so important. If

you've got a major medical appointment, somebody's probably going to remind you.

Doctor's receptionist, the dentist receptionist might call you up and say, you know, you've got an appointment this morning. You know, I already remember that. Well, yeah, but if you miss it, we've got three people standing around here for half an hour doing nothing because you actually forgot.

It's important. When you're reminded of a thing, even though you probably already know it, it tells you how important that thing is, not only for you, but for others. Don't forget, you've got to pick up so-and-so after school today.

I knew that. Well, don't forget because if you do, you're going to have a lonely little child standing out there on the curb of a closed school in the cold, blowing wind, subject to all kinds of unknown predations and dangers for however long of a time until somebody finally remembers, hey, nobody picked up little Johnny from school, right? So a reminder tells you that something is exceedingly important, and this is what Peter says. I stir up your pure minds, but look at the very first word.

What's the first word in chapter 3? Beloved. Where is one of the first places in the New Testament you see this term? I'll give you a hint. It emanates from heaven.

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Matthew chapter 3, later on, yet again, a voice from heaven, Matthew 17, you remember what happens in Matthew 17? You can kind of guess just based on the number of chapters in Matthew. It's a mount of transfiguration, a bright cloud overshadowed them, suddenly a voice came out of the cloud saying, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. Peter reminded us of this, if you remember, in chapter 1 of this letter, he received from God the Father, honor and glory, when such a voice came to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Peter was present, heard the voice from heaven, and he knows what it means when he says, beloved.

As the Father loves the Son, Peter says, you to whom I am writing are beloved. And you think, well, you're making a lot of this. Look at verse 8 of this chapter, but beloved do not forget.

Look at verse 14, therefore beloved looking forward. Look at verse 15, our beloved brother Paul. Look at verse 17, you therefore beloved since you know.

It's not an idle term, it's not a throwaway word, beloved. Another reason why you would put someone in remembrance, what's the last thing you tell somebody who's been for a visit and they're getting in their car? What do you tell them? Okay, drive carefully. What, you think I'm some kind of maniac? Why are you telling me to drive carefully? Why do you tell someone, you know, watch out for the other guy, drive carefully, be safe? It is because you care about

someone, right? And you're telling them something they already know and you already know, but it's an expression of concern.

It's what people who care about each other say. Peter cares about his fellow believers, the ones to whom he ministers as an apostle, and he says, beloved, I'm writing this to you because I care about you. We always remind our kids of stuff they already know.

You know, wear your boots, put on your coat, don't forget your lunch, look both ways before you cross the street, look behind you before you pull out into traffic, please. Lock your car, you know, park near a light tonight. It's concern.

Well, I'm belaboring this for a reason. Peter belabors it. He emphasizes it.

He repeats it in this letter. Look at what chapter 3 says, beloved, I now write to you this second epistle, in both of which, both of these letters, I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder. So he calls them beloved, he says, I'm writing this second letter, and then he says, I stir up your pure minds.

The word pure is real interesting here. This means, it's often translated sincere, but what it really means is unmixed, unclouded, not polluted, not tainted. So why would he choose this particular term? Why wouldn't he just say, I stir up your minds by way of reminder? But he says, your pure minds.

This is a mind that is not already led astray. I'm speaking to the better part of your nature. I'm speaking to the unclouded, unmixed, untainted part of your mind.

And this is kind of an interesting principle, because we're all a mixture of good and bad things. We understand some things, we don't understand others. God works with what we have that's right.

Remember in our memory verse, where we said, whatsoever things are pure, lovely, of good report, and we looked at it in Greek, and it says, to the extent that something is pure, to the extent that something is lovely, to the extent that it is of good report, find the good part and think on that. Well, Peter says, I'm appealing to that part of your mind that's not messed up. I am talking to that part of your soul that is working correctly and is not mixed up, has not been deceived.

I am stirring up the pure part of your mind, because that part will drag the rest of it along. It will overcome the other. The new nature can overcome the old, it can dominate the old, it can gradually eradicate the old.

He doesn't say, I'm appealing to the baser part of your instincts, I'm appealing to the deceived part of your mind. And this is a principle that we think about when we deal with one another. We can choose to look at each other in terms of faults and shortcomings and what's not right.

This is called holding a grudge. Well, I don't care how many good things you've done, I don't care how many times you've said you're sorry, I don't care about all the parts and ways and things that you're doing right, you messed up and I'm not forgetting it. Look at what the Apostle Peter does, he says, Beloved, I am talking to you, I'm thinking about the pure part of your mind, and I'm stirring that up by way of reminder, because that's the best part of you, that's the part that will carry forward and can overcome and replace the other.

We should do this for one another as God has done for us. It's called forgiveness, it's called not bearing a grudge. By way of reminder that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken.

Mindful of the words. The words have power, the truth of God has power, the scriptures have power, these things we study have power, it's not just something to do on a Friday night or a Sunday morning. The word of God is living and powerful.

It has divine, dynamic power, it's not just any old truth, you can know geometry, you can know the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the square of the other two sides, that doesn't empower you or enable you in any way, unless you're building a dog house maybe, but the truth of God has inherent power, these are truths that reach beyond this universe, partake of the eternal, and it makes a difference. It gives us peace that passes understanding, it gives us insight that goes beyond mere reasoning. That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of us the apostles of our Lord and Savior, knowing this first.

How many things can be first? Didn't he give us this once before? He said, knowing this first in our previous context, and what he means is that this is of paramount importance. Remember back in verse 20 of chapter 1, he said, knowing this first, no prophecy of scriptures of any private derivation. Now he says, knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days.

Well, we're in different areas. When you're talking about revelation of the truth, what's the paramount thing to remember? The truth has a divine origin. When you're talking about attacks from the outside, this is the first thing to know.

That in the last days, scoffers will come, walking according to their own lusts. So what has Peter done in this letter? First of all, he said, here's what true scripture is. Men spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

He says, the alternative to that within the church is a false teacher. And here's what they're like. This is how you could be deceived and diverted inside the church, a false teacher.

They're at your feasts. They're in your midst. They're beside you, and then they've got their hand in your pocket.

That's a danger. Now, in the third chapter, he says, here's what you need to know about the last

days. The attacks are going to come from outside.

In the last days, these mockers will come. We're no longer talking about false teachers in the church. We've covered that extensively in chapter 2. These are mockers.

And the word translated mockers is interesting because it's actually doubled here in the context. You have a nominative and an instrumental form, side by side. Mockers will come with mockings.

There will be mockers who are mocking, kind of a thing. There's a nominative and an instrumental here. These people are actually deceiving.

What's interesting to me is the nature of this mocking. When it goes on, if you read this, it says, They're going to walk according to their own desires, and they say, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning. So, when it says they are mockers and they're mocking, you would expect some sort of derisive comments about, Well, who is this God, and where is he? Or, who is this Jesus, and why is he just a raggedy rabbi from Galilee? What is this alleged mocking? Where is the promise of his coming? If you look at this word translated mockers here, or scoffers, where you find it used most frequently in the Bible is in the Gospels, at the arrest and trial of the Lord Jesus.

It's used innumerable times. This is *empaictes*, which comes from *empaicti*. If you look at this in the lexicon, virtually all the uses are in the Gospels, and they are during the trial of Jesus.

Because it comes from this verb, which means to subject, to derision, ridicule, to make fun of, or to mock. So you have Matthew 27.29, When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, Hail, King of the Jews. That's this word.

Three verses later, 27.31 of Matthew, When they had mocked him, they took the robe off him, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to be crucified. Mark 10.34, Jesus said, was predicting his arrest and trial. They will mock him, and scourge him, and spit on him, and kill him, and the third day he will rise again, talking about himself.

Mark 15.20, When they had mocked him, they took the purple off him. Luke 14.29, The man who starts a building and doesn't plan well and can't finish it, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him. Then in Luke 22, we're back to the men who held Jesus, mocking him and beating him.

Luke 22.63 Luke 23.36, The soldiers mock him when he's on the cross and offer him sour wine. The other place that this word is used, and in a different sense, is in Matthew 2. When you think about the structure of the Gospel of Matthew, the birth of Jesus was on this wise, and so on. In Matthew 2, you remember the wise men saw the star in the east, were at that season, and they come to worship.

This, of course, is well after the birth, not on the night that the shepherds come to the manger. The wise men come later. But, they go to Jerusalem, and they say, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? We have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him.

Herod gets with his guys, and they inquire, What time did the star appear? And so on, and you've got the slaughter. And so, when the wise men go and find the child, and his mother Mary, and they give their gifts, and they depart another way, it tells us in Matthew 2.16, Then Herod, when he saw that he was empetinod, or empeizod, mocked. Now, were the wise men trying to mock Herod? Were they going back saying, Ha ha, what a stooge Herod is.

What does it mean when it says he was mocked? They fooled him. They misled him. He was expecting them to come back and tell him where the child was, and they didn't go back.

So, this word not only means to jeer at, and deride, and make fun of, it also means to mislead, or to feel like you've been made a fool of. So, and remembering that, in all likelihood, the Gospel accounts were not particularly widely circulated at the time that Peter was writing. The Gospels were probably being written around the same time Peter was writing this letter.

People aren't familiar with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The use of this word can just as easily be the second meaning as the first. I would submit to you that these people are not mocking, deriding, jeering, and poking fun.

They are misleading. They are misdirecting. Herod was really misdirected.

He was watching for wise men who were never going to come. And he realized that they had outwitted him. They had done something he was not expecting.

This is what these guys do. And the word is repeated twice by Peter, and I would not translate it as scoffers here, knowing this, that misleading misleaders, people who are skilled at misleading, skilled at misdirection, the hand is quicker than the eye, you know, the guy's got a nickel in his hand, he closes his hand, opens it, and it's gone. Where did the nickel go? I didn't see what happened.

I missed it. That's this word. Misleaders, misdirectors will come according to their own desires and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the old timers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

Now, here is the substance of the misdirection, of the deception. If they're mockers, you would expect, here are the jokes they tell, here are the derisive comments they make. Here is the misdirection that makes them misleaders.

They say, how can you be expecting Jesus to come back when we've got a steady state here, we've got a set of processes in the natural world that have always been at work, you can project

them into the past, you can project them into the future. This is the fundamental supposition of evolution. Scientists look and they see that complicated, vastly sophisticated genomes are capable of adaptation and can change the morphology of an organism to best survive in a particular environment.

And they say, well, this adaptability, this ability to change morphology in small ways, if you project that far enough into the past, well, you could start with a little tiny organism and it would gradually change its morphology to become us and it will continue into the future. And we could morph into who knows what in the indefinite future. So all things that we see now stretch into the past and will stretch into the future.

The misdirection, the misleading argument is, and when they say since the fathers fell asleep, they're saying in recorded history, the fathers are the ones that told the oldest stories. And from ancient times, as far back as history stretches, things have been the way they are now. The implication being what makes you think there's going to be a supernatural intervention of the coming of this alleged Jesus.

Look at the facts. The misdirection, the mocking, if you will, is let me argue from present facts to say there never was a Jesus in the past and there never will be a Jesus in the future. This is the misleading message.

And it is ubiquitous. It's all around us. It is taught as truth in schools and nothing else is allowed to be presented.

We live in a materialist universe. Matter and energy have always existed all the way back into the billions of years in the past and we can't even say before the singularity that was the Big Bang, we can't even make a claim about anything before that. And the universe is going to continue to expand indefinitely.

We've already determined that it's not going to contract and collapse again. So the natural laws that we see around us have always been in this universe and will always be in this universe. So how can you say that there was a Jesus or will be a Jesus? That he ever came the first time or that he's ever coming the second time? Peter says, beware, watch out, be mindful of what the prophets spoke because these deceptive speakers will come with this argument, with this steady state universe argument, this natural law based argument.

Look at the evidence of your senses. Look at the evidence of science. You're silly to believe anything other than what we can document in our laboratory and with our theorems and axioms.

And then he says, for they willfully forget. This isn't exactly what it says. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see what it is that they are willfully doing. Willfully is correct.

Forget is not correct.

So let's pause and take our break. And when we come back, we'll get the rest of the details on this attack and what Peter says to do about it.