

A Growing Concern

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[0 : 00] But if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in 2 Peter chapter 1.

2 Peter chapter 1 and if we read again at verse 13. 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 13. Where Peter writes, I think it is right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me and I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things and so on.

If you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, how would you spend your last day? If you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, how would you spend your last day?

That's the question which has come up on more than one occasion in our Bible studies on Wednesday evening while we've been considering 1st and 2nd Peter.

And as it was highlighted in our Bible study, this question was often asked as an English exam question during the 1990s. If you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, how would you spend your last day?

[1 : 28] Of course this question was asked in our Bible studies of 1st and 2nd Peter because there was future uncertainty in the 1st century.

The future uncertainty of the church in the 1st century was a real possibility. But as you know, future uncertainty is a real possibility in every century because none of us are promised tomorrow.

None of us are promised tomorrow. Therefore, if we knew that our life would end in 24 hours, how would we spend our last day? Would we not be more urgent with the things that matter?

Would we not spend our last day of this world seeking to do things that are of the utmost importance? And you know, maybe for you you would spend your last day in this world with those whom you love and care for.

But more than that, if you're a Christian, would you not spend your last day and use your last opportunity to urgently tell your family and friends who are out of Christ that they need to be saved?

[2 : 35] Would you not plead with them to come to Christ for salvation? And you know, my unconverted friend this evening, as someone who's still out of Christ, would you not spend your last day and use your last opportunity to urgently seek the Lord with all your heart?

Would you not bow your knee and confess your sins and seek to have Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? My friend, if you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, how would you spend your last day?

But you know, the reason this question was asked in the Bible study was to make us think about the fact that if we knew, if we knew that we only had 24 hours to live and that we would spend it in a completely different way to the way we're spending it right now, if we would spend our last day speaking about the Lord and also seeking the Lord, then why aren't we doing it right now?

Why aren't we doing it right now? Because if we know that we're not promised tomorrow, why don't we have the same urgency? Why aren't we making the most of our opportunities?

Why aren't we pleading to know Christ and to make Christ known? My friend, if you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, how would you spend your last day?

[4 : 05] And you know, when Peter wrote his second letter to the church, he didn't know whether he had 24 hours or 24 days to live.

But one thing Peter did know was that he wouldn't be in this world for much longer. And because of that, Peter had a growing concern for the church.

And if we were to have asked Peter our question, this question, if you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, how would you spend your last day? If we were to have asked Peter that question, I'm

sure that Peter would respond as he does in this passage.

And he would say to us that he would give a reminder, a revelation and a reassurance. Peter would give a reminder, a revelation and a reassurance.

And there are our three headings this evening. A reminder, a revelation and a reassurance. So first of all, a reminder, a reminder.

[5 : 09] We see that in verse 12. Peter says, therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

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

Now, second Peter was in many ways Peter's final farewell speech to the church of Jesus Christ. Because as we said, and as Peter confirmed in these verses, Peter was about to die.

Peter didn't know how long he had to live. He didn't know whether it was days, weeks or months.

But Peter knew that he would shortly be put to death by the Emperor Nero for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And we know this to be true because at the time of writing this letter, Peter was in Rome. In fact, he had spent the last 10 years of his life writing to the churches and ensuring that the gospel would be proclaimed after he has gone home to glory.

[6 : 24] And we're told that in 60 AD, Peter helped Mark write his gospel, mainly to the Christians in Rome.

And then in 64 AD, first Peter was written to encourage suffering and scattered saints throughout the church. And then three years later in 67 AD, this letter of second Peter was written, which turned out to be only written only months before Peter was brutally crucified upside down in 68 AD. But you know, as an apostle, Peter, he was someone who knew what it was to be a suffering and scattered saint.

And Peter wrote his final letter to encourage Christians to keep growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But with time running out and with death being an imminent reality, Peter had this growing concern. He had a growing concern that every Christian in the church would be a growing Christian.

[7 : 36] And because Peter had a growing concern and he wanted to give the church a reminder that every Christian must be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

Peter wanted to give the church a reminder. And that's what he says in verse 12. He says, therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

Peter had a growing concern and he wanted to give the church a reminder that every Christian must be a growing Christian. And every Christian must possess and practice these seven Christian qualities, which we looked at last week.

They're mentioned in verse five. These qualities, he says in verse five, for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love.

Peter had a growing concern and he wanted to give the church this reminder that every Christian should be a growing Christian. Every Christian should be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

[9 : 01] Every Christian should seek and strive to possess and practice these seven Christian qualities in their life. Peter says, every Christian must make every effort to supplement their faith by their Christian conduct, comprehension, control, commitment, character, care and compassion.

Every Christian says Peter must be diligent to make their calling and election sure. My friend Peter, he had a growing concern and he wanted to give the church a reminder of these qualities, these seven Christian qualities.

And he wanted to give the church a reminder of these things because the reality is we are prone to forgetting them.

And as Peter says, you know what these qualities are and you know that you have to seek and strive to possess and practice these qualities in your life.

But Peter says it's also good to be reminded of them. It's good to be reminded of them. It's good to be reminded because we're prone to distraction, we're prone to disruption, we're prone to

disturbance, we're prone to even disregarding these Christian qualities.

[10:20] And you know, as a fellow elder in the church of Jesus Christ, Peter considered it his responsibility. He considered it his responsibility to remind, repeat and reaffirm to every Christian in his pastoral care.

He wanted to remind, repeat and reaffirm this requirement, the requirement to seek and to strive, the requirement to possess and practice these Christian qualities in their life.

And that's what Peter says in verse 13. He says, I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder.

Peter considered it his responsibility to remind, repeat and reaffirm to every Christian in his pastoral care. He wanted to remind them of this requirement to seek and strive to possess and practice all these Christian qualities in their life.

And you know, as fellow elders ourselves, as fellow elders in the church of Jesus Christ, it's also our responsibility to repeat, remind and reaffirm to every Christian in our pastoral care.

[11:39] It's our responsibility that we remind them of these things that they need to seek and strive and possess and practice these Christian qualities in their life.

As fellow elders, we need to be like Peter. We need to do what Peter does here. We need to start up our congregation by reminding them of their responsibilities as a Christian.

But as fellow elders, we must ensure that we are leading by example. We must ensure that we're leading by example and we do that by being stirred up ourselves so that we can start up others.

We need to take our responsibility seriously so that those who are under our pastoral care will take their responsibility seriously. And you know, Peter, he reminds us that whilst we're in the body, we need to take our responsibility seriously.

We need to be earnest elders. We need to be committed Christians. We need to be striving saints who make every effort to supplement their faith with these Christian qualities.

[12:52] Because like Peter, one day soon we will have to put off our earthly tent.

That's what Peter says. He says, I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder. Because I know that the putting off of my body will be soon as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

You know, in verse 14, Peter highlights that Jesus had told him that he would die a martyr's death. And we know this to be true because we're told in John 21 that after Peter was restored by Jesus, Jesus said to Peter, truly, truly I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.

But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. And John tells us, he gives us that little note that Jesus said this to Peter to show by what kind of death Peter was going to glorify God.

And so Peter knew that he was going to be put to death very soon. And he says that one day soon he'll put off his body.

[14:14] Literally he says he'll put off his tabernacle. And we're familiar with this euphemism, which describes our earthly body like a tabernacle or a tent.

Paul used it in 2 Corinthians 5 when he said, if our earthly tent be destroyed, we have a house not made with hands but eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent says Paul, we groan longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. Therefore we walk by faith and not by sight.

But more than that, the earthly tent, it's also used in the Bible to describe the body of Jesus. John opens his gospel with that wonderful reminder that Jesus is the Word of God.

And he's the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us. He tabernacled among us. He pitched his tent among us so that we could be hold his glory.

[15:19] And just like the tabernacle in the wilderness was a temporary dwelling that moved from place to place. The writer is saying here that our body, it's just a temporary dwelling.

It's not permanent. It's not fixed. It's not stable, stationary or secure. It's not enduring, everlasting or eternal. No, my friend, as we are repeatedly reminded in this life, our earthly tent, it is transitory.

It's temporary. It's transient. Our earthly tent, it just fades, fails and it's so fleeting. It's fleeting.

And it's because of this that Peter, he has this growing concern and he wanted to give the church a reminder that every Christian should be a growing Christian.

Every Christian should be a growing Christian. But secondly, we see that Peter had a growing concern which led to a revelation.

[16:22] A revelation. So there's a reminder and a revelation. A revelation. Look at verse 15. Peter says, And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things.

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty.

For when He received honour and glory from God the Father and the voice was born to Him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.

So Peter has already given us a reminder that we're to make every effort to supplement our faith and we're to do that by seeking and striving to possess and practice all these Christian qualities, the Christian qualities of conduct, comprehension, control, commitment, character, care and compassion.

But now Peter says that he has a growing concern that every Christian will be a growing Christian. And Peter wants to make sure of this because before he dies, before he puts off his earthly tent, Peter, he says that he wants to make every effort to preserve his teaching so that it can be passed on to future generations.

[17:56] And you know, when Peter says that he's going to make every effort there in verse 15, he wants to make every effort to preserve and pass on his teaching. That word, every effort.

It's the same word that he used back in verse 5 to teach us to make every effort to supplement our faith. And this word, every effort, it's a word that emphasizes and explains that Peter had an urgency about him.

There was, he had this hurry, he was in a hurry, he had this eager and enthusiastic desire to ensure that his teaching was preserved and passed on to future generations.

But the thing is, Peter not only had a growing concern for his generation, he also had a growing concern for our generation. And you know, it should be a challenge to us to follow the example of Peter, that we not only have a growing concern about the church in our generation, but we also have a growing concern about the church in the generations that are to come.

My friend, like Peter, we need to have a growing concern that every Christian in the generations to come will be a growing Christian. And as Christians, following the example of Peter, we should be eager and enthusiastic.

[19:24] We should have an urgent urgency about us. We should make every effort to protect and to preserve the cause of Christ in our community.

Because the reality is, like it was in Peter's day, there are many things that are coming in and they're trying to damage, deteriorate, disable and to discourage the cause of Christ in our community.

And as I'm sure you're aware, the latest attempt is the resource that's being given to schools on relationships, sexual health and parenting, which is a resource that's been promoted and pushed by our Scottish government.

They want to be the first to have this education in all of their schools. And you know, when you read it, it's a frightening resource, the RSHP resource.

It's a frightening resource that seeks to stimulate and support the teaching of homosexuality, transgenderism and much, much more.

[20:34] And they're pushing it on to our children as young as the age of five. And you know, this resource is trying to be made widely available to all our Scottish schools.

You know, my friend, we may be in a pandemic, but the devil is still active. He's still active. And you know, that's why we need to pray for our counsellors.

We need to pray for our communities. We need to pray for our schools and their teachers. We need to pray for our government. But more than that, we need to be active as Christians.

We need to be like Peter and be eager and enthusiastic. We need to have this urgency about us.

We need to make every effort to protect and to preserve the cause of Christ in our community.

My friend, we need to be like Peter and have a growing concern about the church in our generation and the church in the generations that are to come.

[21 : 35] We need to have a growing concern that every Christian now and in the future will be a growing Christian. But how do we do that?

How do we do that? Well, Peter says we need to testify to the greatness and majesty of Jesus Christ. We need to testify to the greatness and majesty of Jesus Christ.

That's what Peter did. As we mentioned, there were those in Peter's day who were trying to damage, deteriorate, disable and discourage the cause of Christ.

There were false teachers who were seeking to unsteady and undermine the teaching of the apostles. And that's what Peter will directly address in chapter 2.

We'll see that, God willing, next Lord's Day, where Peter will directly address the doom, the depravity and the deception of the false teachers.

[22 : 34] But in these verses, Peter highlights that he has this growing concern. And he has a growing concern because of the accusations that are being made against him by false teachers.

The false teachers, they're claiming that Peter and the other disciples, they're just following a myth. They're following a myth that Jesus Christ wasn't the Messiah.

He wasn't the Son of God. He wasn't raised from the dead. And he's not coming back again. The false teachers were claiming that the disciples just made it all up and it's just this mega myth and a fanciful fable.

And you know, this false teaching that the false teachers were further spreading, it was actually instigated or endorsed by the Sanhedrin.

You remember in Matthew 28 that when the resurrection of Jesus took place, the elders of the Sanhedrin, they gave money to the soldiers who guarded the tomb of Jesus and they told them, the Sanhedrin said, tell people that the disciples of Jesus came by night and stole his body while we were asleep.

[23 : 55] And if this comes to the governor's ears, Pilate's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. And the soldiers were told they took the money and they did as they were directed.

And that story has been spread about among the Jews. And these false teachers, they're still spreading that story. They're still undermining the teaching of the apostles.

But Peter, he refused to allow these lies to lead people astray. And he affirms and reaffirms to the church that he was an eyewitness.

He was an eyewitness to the greatness and majesty of Jesus Christ. And because he was an eyewitness, Peter says, he will come again.

He will come again. And in particular, Peter mentions the occasion when he, James and John were witnesses of the transfiguration of Jesus.

[24 : 52] And Peter says that he didn't make this up because there was more than one of them who saw Jesus transfigured and heard the voice from heaven.

There was more than one eyewitness testimony of this great and majestic revelation on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter says in verse 17, when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory.

This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

So Peter, James and John, they witnessed Jesus transfigured before them. They saw Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus, and they heard the voice of God the Father speaking.

And because there were these three eyewitness testimony, Peter was saying, we know that this is true. We know that this is true. We know that Jesus is the Messiah.

[25 : 55] We know that he's the Son of God. He's the Savior of sinners. He's the one who died for our sin and rose again from the dead on the third day. And the reality is, says Peter, he's coming back.

He's coming back. And with that, Peter gives the church this reassurance. He gives the church a reassurance.

And that's what we see in lastly. A reassurance. Peter has this growing concern that every Christian will be a growing Christian.

But with his time running out, and in order to make the most of his opportunities, Peter gives a reminder, a revelation and a reassurance.

A reminder, a revelation. And lastly, a reassurance. A reassurance. We see that in March 19. Peter says, and we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay

attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

[27 : 03] Knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And so with a growing concern that every Christian would be a growing Christian, Peter gives a reassurance, a reassurance that the word of God is the means by which a Christian will continue to grow between now and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

And as we said, this is, this is what Second Peter is all about. This is what Peter's final, final letter is all about, that between now and the second coming of Jesus, the church is to keep praying and keep persevering and keep growing in grace.

And what Peter says here is that regardless of these fabrications from the false teachers, and regardless of their limitless lies to lead the church astray, regardless of their many attempts to damage and deteriorate and disable and discourage the cause of Christ, Peter says that our assurance and our reassurance is in the word of God.

And we will do well says Peter. We will do well to pay attention to the word of God, because it's like a lamp shining in a dark place.

[28 : 34] He says the word of God is just a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And Peter says we're to pay attention to it. We're to treasure it in our hearts until the day dawns on the second coming and the morning star rises.

And the morning star that Peter mentions there, it's a reference to the second coming of Jesus, because he is, Jesus is the bright and morning star.

And you know what Peter is saying is in many ways just what we were asking earlier. If you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, how would you spend your last day?

And as we said, we would probably spend our last day differently to the way we're living our life right now, because there would be more of an urgency. There would be more of an urgency to make the most of our opportunities while we still have time.

And you know what Peter is reminding and reassuring us is that our life could end in 24 hours, not by suffering, but by the second coming.

[29 : 49] For as Jesus said, no one knows the day nor the hour, not even the angels of heaven nor the sun, but the Father only. Therefore says Jesus, be you ready for at an hour when you think not the Son of man will come.

And you know, Peter is asking us, he's asking us the question we were asking him. If you knew that your life would end in 24 hours, either by suffering or by the second coming, how would you spend your last day?

My friend Peter is giving us a reminder, a revelation and a reassurance that time is short and we're not promised tomorrow.

That we should have an urgency to live for the glory of God while we still have time. We should have an urgency to make the most of our opportunities. We should have an urgency to know Christ and to make Christ known.

But how do we do that? The word of God, the word of God, because my friend our assurance and our reassurance is in the word of God.

[31 : 01] Because as Peter said, he said it in his first letter. He says to the church, we have been born again. We've been born again through the living and abiding word of God.

And Peter reminded us all flesh is as grass, all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the word of our God remains forever.

And this word says Peter, it's the good news that was preached to you. This word is the gospel that was proclaimed in your hearing.

And as Peter reaffirms and assures us here, the word of God, it isn't the invention, the innovation or even the interpretation of man.

No my friend, from Genesis to Revelation, the word of God is God breathed, it's spirit filled. It's the divine breath of God, the Holy Spirit and it's living and active.

[32 : 01] It's sharper than any two edged sword because it's able to bring light and life. It's able to bring and it's able to bring us out of darkness and from death.

My friend, this is what the Bible is reminding us this evening, that God's word, it's God breathed, spirit filled and it's the divine breath of God, the Holy Spirit.

And you know that's why Peter, no sorry, Paul urged Timothy as a young minister to preach the word. He urged him to preach the word, preach this life giving, God breathing, spirit filled word of God.

And Paul said, be ready with it, in season and out of season because it has the light and life to convince sinners and to rebuke saints and to exhort servants.

Therefore my friend, we don't need anything else. We don't need anything else to reach the living or the lost in our community apart from the word of God.

[33 : 11] We don't need anything else to assist and assure us of our growth in grace apart from the word of God. We don't need anything else to direct us because the word of God is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Therefore says Peter, we'll do well to pay attention to the word of God so that we'll continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And so this evening we've seen that Peter had a growing concern that every Christian would be a growing Christian. And with his time running out and in order to make the most of his opportunities, Peter gives to us a reminder, a revelation and a reassurance, a reminder, a revelation and a reassurance.

My friend, if you knew that you only had 24 hours to live, how would you spend your last day? May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for that wonderful reminder this evening, that the Lord, a God who calls us to be urgent, a God who calls us to be passionate, a God who gives to us many reminders because we are so prone to forgetting.

[34 : 45] And Lord, help us, we pray, to live lives that are worthy of the Gospel. Help us, Lord, to seek to bring glory to thy name in all that we say and do.

And Lord, help us to stand firm, help us to keep thriving, help us to keep seeking, to possess and to practice all these Christian qualities in our lives.

And help us, Lord, to do it now, between now and the time when Jesus comes because, Lord, we do not know at what hour our Lord is coming, but Lord, help us to be ready, help us to be watching, help us to have oil in our lamps and to be waiting for the bridegroom to come.

And Lord, at the hour is blessed us then, blessed thy truth to us, teach us from it and teach us to follow in the paths of righteousness.

Go before us, then we pray, bless us, we ask in the week that lies ahead and do us good for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing the words of Psalm 119.

[35 : 52] Psalm 119 in the Sing Psalms version and it's in section 5 we're singing verses 33 down to the verse Mark 40.

Psalm 119 and verse 33, teach me to follow your decrees, then I will keep them to the end, give insight and I'll keep your law with all my heart to it attend.

Lead me in your commandments path, for there, O Lord, delight I find, incline my heart towards your laws from selfish gain, preserve my mind.

O turn my eyes from worthless things, give life according to your word, to me your servant, keep your pledge, so that you may be feared, O Lord.

Go into the verse Mark 40 of Psalm 119 to God's praise. Teach me to follow your decrees, then I will keep them to the end, give insight and I'll keep your law with all my heart to it attend.

[37 : 13] Lead me in your commandments path, for there, O Lord, delight I find, incline my heart towards your laws from selfish gain, preserve my mind.

O turn my eyes from worthless things, give life according to your word, to me your servant, keep your pledge, so that you may be feared, O Lord.

Remove from me the shame I dread, your laws exalt me by righteousness, O how I long for your decrees, preserve me in your righteousness.