

Sermon 18, Why 2 Peter?, 2 Peter 3:1-3

Proposition: This book exists to remind you about the truth and warn you against those who deny it.

- I. Because You are Beloved, v. 1a
- II. Because there was a First Peter, v. 1b
- III. Because You Need a Reminder, v. 1c
- IV. Because You Need to Remember, v. 2
 - A. That Jesus Spoke by the Prophets and Apostles
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- V. Because You Need a Warning, v. 3
 - A. Scoffers Will Come in the Last Days
 - B. Scoffers Will Live However They Want

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have seen Peter's determination to remind us about the truth that Jesus is definitely coming back. He has warned us against those who teach otherwise and live like there's no tomorrow — and he's going to keep warning us against those people, whom he has labeled false teachers. Here, though, he tips his hand even farther and reveals to us why he's writing to his original audience and thus, by extension, to us. What's the point? Why did he take the time to write this letter? Why are we taking the time to read it, and even more to the point, why are we taking the time to hear two dozen sermons on it? Why spend half a year with this three-chapter summary of the Christian faith? Because we need to be reminded about the truth and warned against those who deny it. That's the point. That's why Peter wrote and why we read. We need to be reminded of the truth. Really, our text this evening presents us with five reasons why the apostle wrote this letter. All of them are important; all of them are relevant for our lives this week.

I. Because You are Beloved, v. 1a

The first reason for this letter is that you are beloved. Peter loves you. And he is not the only New Testament writer to speak this way. Paul and John do it too. You are loved.

Now, you can find belonging in a number of organizations and institutions and groups. But I daresay that you can't join very many groups where they will call you beloved and mean it. Here in the church, though, we actually do think this way. You are beloved to me. I begin writing every sermon with the same words: "Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ." It's my way of reminding myself how much I love you as I seek to present the truth of God's word to you.

Incidentally, the negative side of this is why church can be so painful. You and I expect to be loved at church. We know that anyone who understands the Bible understands that we are supposed to love one another. When you go to Walmart, you don't expect to be beloved there. When you go to the Lion's Club, you expect people to be friendly but it seems to me that you don't expect them to call you "beloved" and mean it. But here in the church, we actually need to regard our Christian brothers and sisters as our beloved. We must love them, even as we have been loved by them.

So why did Peter write? Because he loved the people of God. Why do you give money in the offering plate? Because you love the people of God. Why do we put up with the sin and folly that our fellow Christians drag into the church with them? Because they are beloved to us. The church is our family. And though you may not like your mother, she's still your mother and you love her.

Brothers and sisters, Peter had the mind of Christ. Christ loves the church. And so Peter, imitating his Lord, loved the church too. And you and I will love the church if we too are being conformed to be like Christ.

II. Because there was a First Peter, v. 1b

A major piece of evidence that Peter truly loved the church is the fact that he wrote to them twice. You can do something once for any number of reasons. But if you do it again, then you can safely be said to have liked the experience the first time. You got enough out of it to make it worth doing again. For instance, two years ago I rode a roller coaster for the first time. I got off it and said, "I will never do that again." Now that I know what a roller coaster is like, I have no interest at all in repeating the roller coaster experience.

Well, imagine Peter writing 1 Peter and then saying, "You know what? I'm good. I've had enough of writing to the church." But he didn't. And he highlights that fact here for us. The very existence of two letters from Peter is confirmation that he actually means it when he says "I care. I love you. You are beloved to me."

We don't use this language much. Indeed, contemporary translations like the HCSB and NIV can't bear to see an apostle calling God's people "beloved," and so they tone it down to "dear friends." But Peter didn't say "Dear friends." He said "Beloved." We generally draw a distinction of some kind between friends and loved ones, with the latter being a capacious term for "family." In the New Testament scheme of things, guess where the people of this church belong? That's right. They're not friends. They're loved ones.

Do you show love for your fellow saints like this? We don't necessarily have to address each other with terms of endearment, but we better be acting love, doing love. When's the last time you shared a meal with some loved ones from this congregation? When's the last time you gave a gift to a member of this congregation? When's the last time you volunteered time or effort to help a member of this congregation? Brothers and sisters, if it's been months, or if it's never happened, then you ought to repent. Peter is showing us what every Christian ought to feel and do for his fellow believers. You and I don't have the responsibility of writing Scripture for the

benefit of the global church; we have other duties in the body. But if you're not doing them, then your title of Christian is suspect.

III. Because You Need a Reminder, v. 1c

But even if you're very much a loving member of the body who gives generously to everyone around you, you still need a reminder. We've already had numerous reminders of the truth in this book. Here's another statement, though, of the truth that you and I are forgetful people who need a reminder. Peter tells us that our minds are sincere, uncracked, capable of receiving the truth. We need a reminder; we need our minds stirred up. Why? Because an unstirred, unreminded mind settles down into thinking whatever is convenient at the time. Without reminders, we forget. And that's why Peter wrote two letters to the people of God — one reminding us of how to live under trials, and the other reminding us of how to respond to false teaching.

Brothers and sisters, if you don't read the Bible for yourself then you're contradicting the apostle Peter. He says you need a reminder. If you say "I don't need a reminder," then you are disagreeing with an apostle. Why does this matter?

IV. Because You Need to Remember, v. 2

Because you need to remember that Jesus spoke by the prophets and apostles.

A. That Jesus Spoke by the Prophets and Apostles

In other words, if you disagree with an apostle you disagree with Jesus. If you think that the words of the apostles and prophets are optional, that you don't necessarily to read them and be reminded of them, then you are ultimately not listening to Jesus.

I just had this conversation this week. I told my brother-in-law regarding an article he sent me, "This kind of argument is dangerous because it suggests that you get certain benefits by obeying Christ. But people with perverse hearts will say 'I don't really care whether I get that benefit, so I don't need to obey.'"

"Yeah," Jared responded. "But if they say that then they're saying they don't want Christ."

"You're right," I said. "To say you don't want to obey Him is to say you don't want Him, and to say you don't want Him is to say you don't want to obey Him."

Brothers and sisters, to neglect the word of God is to declare that the knowledge of Christ is not important to you. It's to say that you don't really care whether your Savior has anything to say to you. At the end of the day, to ignore the apostolic reminder is to say that Jesus' commands are irrelevant to you. That's a dangerous place to be.

Now, the fact that all of you are here at evening worship tells me that you want to hear God's word. It tells me that you are interested in knowing Christ better and in loving one another like He taught us. So what is the warning this text has for us? How can we forget that Jesus spoke by the prophets and apostles?

One hazard, I think, is to forget that every text speaks of Christ. We saw at the beginning of this series that Peter wanted us to learn about Christ from the whole Bible. But we often think that Leviticus, say, or Lamentations, may not have much to say about Christ. I heard a Baptist

minister say at a conference a couple of years ago that Bible reading plans that keep you in the Old Testament most of the year are not very valuable for the Christian. Well, if that's your attitude then you are failing to realize that you can and should grow in the knowledge of Christ through the whole Bible, that prophets and apostles alike spoke words from Jesus that we need to remember.

B. That Jesus Is Lord and Savior

One of the most important pieces of the knowledge of Christ that we have to remember is that He is Lord and Savior.

For Jesus to be Lord means a couple of things. First of all, it means that He is the God mentioned thousands of times in the Old Testament by that name LORD. He is Jehovah. He is Yahweh, just as the Father and the Spirit are. That means that we ought to worship Him as such and love and obey Him as such. For Him to be Lord means that what He says goes. He is in charge. No one can dispute His word. We often laugh at Peter's "No, Lord" statement in the gospels because it's self-contradictory. But if Jesus is truly Lord, which He is, then you and I are never allowed to say "No, Lord." Instead, we must always and only say "Yes, Lord." We have to obey Him all the time, listening to what He has told us through the prophets and apostles.

But not only is He Lord; He is also Savior. The same Lord whose word is law is the one who died in our place so that we could live. He "lords it over" us, but He saves us. Indeed, to know Jesus as Lord and Savior is a summary of the entire Christian message. It is faith to know Him as Savior, love to know Him as Lord. It is obedience to know Him as Lord, trust to know Him as Savior. If you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, you know yourself as created, sinful, and dependent. You know yourself as someone who needs a Savior and someone who needs a boss, who needs a Lord. You know that you are not capable of adequately directing your own life. And you know that Jesus is the only one in the world who is Lord and Savior, who can direct your life and who can save you from your own weakness, sin, failure, and depression! To know this is to be a Christian.

But though you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, and pray to and listen to Him as such, you still need a warning. That's the final reason for this little letter we call 2 Peter.

V. Because You Need a Warning, v. 3

Though we need to know Christ first of all, once we've got that down then the most important thing to know is that scoffers are gonna come and they're gonna scoff. Haters gonna hate, mongers gonna mong, hatemongers gonna mong hate — and scoffers gonna come and scoff. They are going to laugh themselves silly at the idea of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

A. Scoffers Will Come in the Last Days

They will arrive in the last days. Now, does this mean the period right before the end of time — the last decade or so of planet Earth? Clearly, according to the New Testament, the last days are much more than this. We live in the last days, because the Bible describes the entire time between Jesus' Ascension and His Second Coming as the Last Days. Let me read you some of the examples.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Heb 1:1-2).

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1Co 10:11).

Brothers and sisters, we are the children of the last days. Now is the time when we can and will encounter scoffers. We should expect that people will regard our beliefs and practices as ridiculous. We should expect some scorn from the broader society. We should not say, “I was mocked! I’m going to leave the faith.” No. We should say “I was mocked. Jesus and the apostles were right!”

Mocking is evidence that our faith is *true*. Everyone who originally proclaimed the Christian faith was not only scorned but also martyred. As far as we know, John was the only apostle who wasn’t killed for his faith, and that wasn’t for lack of trying on the part of his enemies. They boiled him in oil, but he wouldn’t die, so they exiled him to Patmos instead. Brothers and sisters, you’re going to be mocked. People are going to find you completely ridiculous. And they will laugh out loud when they think that you believe some first-century Jew is your Lord and Savior.

B. Scoffers Will Live However They Want

Not only will they laugh at you; they get to live however they want. I just read it last night: A life of discipline and self-control is the mark of a Christian, while a life of self-indulgence is the mark of an unbeliever. Scoffers will live according to the dictates of their own desires. They will do whatever they want, regardless of the cost to others and ultimate even damage to themselves.

The reason scoffers are so successful is because their lifestyle sounds really good. You mean I get to do whatever I want? I get to follow my desires, yell at the people I don’t like, ignore bills and notices and things that make me uncomfortable? Hell yeah.

So say most of our fellow Americans. And in so doing, they are literally assenting to Hell. They are saying “Yes, I want Hell because Hell is where I do whatever I want instead of submitting to anyone else.”

Brothers and sisters, Peter is trying to make the contrast between Heaven and Hell very clear. He’s showing us that you can either live a life of growing in the knowledge of Christ, or you can follow your desires and do whatever you want. But you can’t do both.

Why don’t you stay here, where you’re beloved, where you have a Lord and Savior, and where your desires can be reprogrammed? Why don’t you give yourself to following Christ? Yes, you’ll be mocked. You won’t get to do everything you want. But you will get to know Jesus, and that’s what you were created for. So let’s pursue the knowledge of Christ as a congregation.

How will your life change this week if you really believe these verses? You will live as someone beloved. You will have that warm little coal of joy in your heart all the time as you constantly remember that God loves you and His people do too. You will seek to read and remember Scripture this week. And you won’t be stunned when you get mocked for your beliefs

and actions. Instead, you will be full of joy, full of peace, full of grace, full of Christ. Sounds like a good lifestyle to me. Let's seek it. Amen.