

2 Peter 1:12-18 – Holding onto the truth about Jesus

12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

The Olympic marathon is happening today. Not all who started training for it made it to the start. Not all who start will finish. Some will find the cost, the pain and the challenge too much for them. Perhaps some got distracted by other concerns in life – money, business or family. They will therefore have no chance of winning the prize. It is the same in the Christian life. Some begin with a profession of faith, and hope to arrive in glory. But later, they are nowhere – they are not even in the race at all any more. Peter knew that. One of the dangers was that false teachers would lead believers away, tempting them into an uncontrolled life of sin. He wrote this letter to encourage us to hold on, to avoid the temptations, and to finish the race well.

Remember and hold on! (v12-15)

Peter had been telling the believers that they needed to go forward – to make every effort to be holy in all of life. Christians must be different; they are new people. They must live the life of God now, and forever. This is not new teaching – all believers have heard it. It is basic – it is the teaching to repent and live in God's way. Peter knew all this, and believed that his readers were mature. But, he still wanted to remind them (v12) – and said he would do it always (v13). Why? It is not enough to know the truth. We must also be moved by the truth. The truth must have living power in our lives. He wanted to “stir them up” (v13). Do you know the power, not just the words, of the truth? (2 Timothy 3:5, 1 Corinthians 4:20).

Peter knew that his time was short (v14). Jesus had told him that when he was old, he would be led away to die for his faith (John 21:17-19). Until then, he must feed God's sheep. We will all leave this world quicker than we realise. Peter spoke about dying as leaving this “tent”. A tent is a temporary house – a house for a short time. The human body is a marvellous thing. But, our present bodies are corruptible, and cannot enter the eternal kingdom of glory. They must be changed. They are also decaying and fading away because of sin. They need to be changed. One day we will have a glorious resurrection body, which will be ours forever (1 Corinthians 15:35-58). Since our time in our “tent” now is short, we should do all the good we can. There is one life only to be fruitful for Jesus; one chance to be faithful. The greatest good we can do is to bring the truth to others. The best legacy (memorial) is not streets, universities or airports with our name – it is if the truth we teach and show is remembered by others after we pass away. Does the truth live in you? The truth is not just for camps, or for Sundays; but to be remembered each day that we are still here.

Christianity is truth, not empty stories (v16-18)

Why should we remember these truths? Because they are truths. Peter, as an apostle, had been an eyewitness. Nobody today has been an eyewitness of who Jesus is and what he did, and therefore there are no apostles today (Acts 1:21-26, Corinthians 9:1). Peter had seen the risen Jesus with his own eyes. He had seen him taken to die, and seen him risen again from the grave. There are many stories told in the world; some are made up, and are very clever. But Peter was not telling a story that had been passed to him. He was speaking about things he himself knew. He had walked with the Lord Jesus, and seen him with his own eyes, and touched him with his own hands. He himself had seen the miracles which Jesus had done, and heard his words with his own ears.

Jesus' feet walked in this world, and he was buried in a grave in this world. He rose again, and became the true Lord of all this world. Peter had seen Jesus' power and his coming. He knew that he was the one and only Son of God. He had also had this testimony at one very special time (v17-18). We can read about that time in Matthew 17:1-8. It was at a time when many people had rejected Jesus. He had been telling the disciples that he would be betrayed, would suffer and would die. He would look like he was weak and helpless. But before then, he showed them his true gospel. The curtain was pulled back, and they saw that he was the holy and glorious one who had come from heaven. They also saw a cloud of glory come, and heard the voice of God the Father speak out of it. They heard God testify that Jesus was his beloved Son. God testified to Jesus, and Peter had heard it. He knew that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life – the only way to the Father, and the only revealer of the Father's glory to us. This is the most important truth at all. There is no other one. He is the only risen Lord of this world and of our lives. He is our judge who will welcome us into glory or send us to hell at last. That is something to remember and hold on to! In this world, many things distract people. They are thinking about exams, about football, about elections, about boys or girls – but they are forgetting that Jesus is the Lord and Saviour. Is Jesus “beloved” to you? Do you agree with the voice of the Father? Are you well pleased with him? These are not just stories – they are the difference between eternal life and death.