

Route Sixty-Six

Part Sixty-One

2nd Peter

Peter's Final Lesson

(John 5:39; 2 Peter 1:5-9)

With Study Questions

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You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins (2 Peter 1:5-9).

Introduction

A conversation is recorded toward the end of the Gospel of John between Jesus and Peter. As you know, prior to the crucifixion, three times Peter denied that he was a follower of Christ (Luke 22:54-62). This conversation is after that, it is after the resurrection (John 21:15-19). This latter exchange between Jesus and Peter also had a threefold repetition.

Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. Three times Peter answered in the affirmative. Three times Jesus responded by calling Peter to minister to His sheep. It was in this dialogue that Jesus revealed to Peter what kind of death he would endure to glorify God (John 21:19); something to which Peter refers in this epistle (2 Peter 1:14).

It is likely well over thirty years between that conversation and the writing of the Second Peter. It is no stretch to conclude that the words of Jesus were deeply etched in Peter's heart. For more than three decades Peter, albeit with failures, sought to keep that calling given to him by his Savior. Now, as he faced his own death, he was confronted with a great concern. Interlopers!

As Peter is exiting the front door of his earthly dwelling to enter his eternal glory, he looks back and sees intruders arriving through the rear. Jesus had commissioned Peter to care, tend, feed and protect His household. These intruders are not attacking from without but from within. They are not throwing rocks through the windows, they are making friends with the children and being invited in. Invited in, not merely to learn and grow, but to teach and influence. They are winning the affections and allegiance of those who have called on Christ. And not to a good, truthful end.

Peter will not retire without giving a refresher. We so need to be reminded.

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³ Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*, ¹⁴ knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. ¹⁵ Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease (2 Peter 1:12-15).

This thought caused me to reflect upon Dr. Greg Bahnsen who died at the age of forty-seven, yet he left behind a tome of priceless theological instruction.¹ A former member of our church, Dr. Mike Stingley (also a pastor) was good friends with Dr. Bahnsen. Dr. Stingley had indicated to me that Dr. Bahnsen's prolific output of material was, in part, motivated by the knowledge that he knew he was not well and may not live a long life.

What will this apostle, whose life and ministry contained moments of brilliant success and dismal failure, commend to us?

Survey of First Peter

Early on Peter assures us that God has provided what we need. No Christian is left destitute. God is an ample supplier who withholds no good thing **"from those who walk uprightly"** (Psalm 84:11b).

¹ A recent project has made Dr. Bahnsen's materials available in digitized form without a paywall: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/solo/thebahnsenproject/>

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:2, 3).

Yet you will notice that **“all things *pertain[ing]* to life and godliness”** is contingent upon **“the knowledge of Him [Christ]”**. It is true knowledge of Christ that Peter sees being threatened. This is what Peter seeks to remedy. Peter is not addressing people who are denying Christ outright. He addressing people denying the true Christ. How often we hear the world tell us what Jesus would or would not do! The morphing of Christ into a caricature of who He truly is carries a greater danger than to altogether deny Christ.

Herein lies the strategy of the evil one. The atheist has always been a relatively insignificant antagonist. It's the false apostle and heretical teachers within the church causing all the chaos.

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

It's been said that Peter's first epistle was *hope amid trial*, the emphasis in his second is *growth in, and through, true knowledge*. But he is quick to address how knowledge does, and should, affect behavior. There is a false and breezy aphorism which asserts, “Never mind what you believe; the thing which matters is how you live.” Such a disposition is patently pharisaical and unbiblical. The way one thinks and believes will inevitably dictate behavior. And the reason, or motivation, for our behavior is of paramount importance-to the glory of God.

We are called to be diligent, after which Peter offers a succession of attributes which should adorn, and extend, from true saving faith. Virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness and brotherly kindness

are the marks of a flush and fruitful faith. These things are to be ours and are to abound.

Not all, but certain sharks (mako and great white, e.g.) will die if they stop swimming forward. I am not at all suggesting that there aren't times we should rest (Mark 6:31). And as we get older, we may have to adjust our schedules to accommodate fatigue or illness. But coasting into the finish line of life is a spiritually unhealthy plan.

The first chapter closes with Peter referencing the value of God-breathed Scripture as the means by which the light of Christ comes (2 Peter 1:19-21). But he is quick in chapter two to bring a powerful denunciation regarding false apostles, teachers, heresies and blasphemies (2 Peter 2:1-3). A robe, a pulpit, a cross and even a Bible in hand, does not assure truth. These false teachers who seek to exploit you will face their judgment.

These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever (2 Peter 2:17).

In the meantime, the deceivers will seek as many victims as possible. You may wish to ask yourself if you know a lie when you hear one, especially from the pulpit! When I hear what is being heralded from the loudest pulpits in our land, and look at the tens of thousands in attendance, I fear we have lost discernment. Not that it is necessarily bad to have tens of thousands listen. Spurgeon and Whitefield had such crowds. But their message is a far cry from what rules the theological airwaves today!

And let us not expect these “spots and blemishes” as Peter calls them, who join the Christian feasts (2 Peter 2:13) to be twiddling their moustaches as they walk on stage accompanied by a sinister soundtrack. One of the most subtle, nefarious and currently applicable verses found in this epistle is in chapter two.

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption (2 Peter 19a).

The veneer, the surface of their message is one that offers freedom. For a time, you will walk away feeling liberated, even vindicated. “The sin is not your fault,” they will tell you. Even further, “It is not even sin. And those who are calling it sin are seeking to imprison you in their archaic

religion of guilt!" That **"your sin will find you out"** (Numbers 32:22) seldom finds its way into their lexicon. Their message is one of cool water over burning lava.

The commonly denied message is that there is indeed sin, but there is forgiveness, redemption, grace **"in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"** (2 Peter 1:2). It was the concern of Peter, and it should be the concern of every elder and pastor, that their congregants know a falsehood when they hear one.

In 2 Peter 2:3, Peter speaks of **"deceptive words"**. The Greek is the word *plastos*, from which we get *plastic*. To them, Scripture is a wax nose they can twist wherever they desire. It's been said that the false teachers have the Christian's vocabulary, but not the Christian's dictionary.

I pray I don't sound overly accusatory. Every church, every elder, every pastor should invite a healthy assessment, critique, of their message. This is one of the reasons we write our entire sermons out and give the listener an opportunity to question and, if necessary, correct every Lord's Day (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). Whereas it is possible to be overly critical of others, it is also possible to be overly malleable through the influence of others. The comfort, peace and correction we all extract from those in the ministry should come from their helping us grasp of the Scriptures. And, as we have sought to emphasize, the heart of the message of the Scriptures is Christ and what it testifies of Him.

The third chapter of the epistle contains the message of a sure judgment; another doctrine which the modern, liberated clergy either deemphasizes, ignores, or denies altogether. The answer to this **"great and terrible day of the Lord"** is not to pretend it is not going to happen, but to take refuge in the one who is capable of delivering us from it. Peter call us to **"be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless"** (2 Peter 3:14b).

To be sure, the conduct of our lives will give evidence regarding the sincerity of our faith, but the only way for us to be found without spot and blameless is through our Redeemer, who, as Jude records, is...

...able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24, 25).

Questions for Study

1. Reflect upon how Jesus' conversation with Peter must have impacted him (page 2).
2. What does Peter seem to be witnessing as he realizes his ministry and life are coming to an end? How does he respond to this (page 3)?
3. Do you feel, sometimes, that God is not supplying what you need? What do you suppose is the actual issue (pages 3, 4)?
4. Is there a difference between denying Christ altogether and denying the truth about Christ? Explain which is more dangerous and why (page 4)?
5. Some assert that what we believe doesn't matter, just what we do. Some assert just the opposite. How are these both errors (page 4)?
6. What is the danger in spiritual coasting (pages, 4, 5)?
7. Does a Bible in a teacher's hand assure that he/she will speak the truth? Explain (page 5).
8. A false sense of liberty can be morally and spiritually dangerous. Why (pages 5, 6)?
9. Will there be a judgment? How does one stand through this (page 6)?