

An Important Message II Peter 3:1-2

This past Wednesday at 2:18 p.m. EST you may have received a text message from the IPAWS or the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System. Similar in nature to an Amber Alert or severe weather or flooding alert this was the first test of the Presidential alert.

If you didn't receive one, here's the message:

 Emergency Alerts Now
Presidential Alert

THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed.

Instead of sending out a localized alert message FEMA sent this message out to the nation. The alert system is meant to give the White House the ability to issue a notification to the entire US in the instance of an emergency so there's no way to opt out of the message. FEMA also sent the message out two minutes later on TV and radio.

Peter has issued his own IPAWS to these believers. His warning didn't come from a political leader but a directive from the God of the universe.

In chapter 1 of II Peter, he instructed the people he was writing to make sure of their salvation. With salvation, he wrote comes many promises to help live godly in a world or culture that is antithetical to being a Christian.

II Peter 1:3-4 "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Peter ended the chapter by reminding his readers that the Word of God is inspired by the Holy Spirit

who moved godly men to write it. It did not come because someone sat down and decided to give it a go. All Scripture is breathed out by God. Because of that, it can be trusted and it should be obeyed.

Just how important is the inspiration of Scripture? Peter tells us why in chapter 2. It's because there are going to be people in the world and even in the church who will try to lead you away from the truth with false teaching. Therefore it's imperative that you know the Scriptures. If we want to know just who these false teachers were we should look at two things. We should look closely at what they were teaching and how they were living. If their teaching and living didn't match with what God's Word taught they were false teachers.

How important it is folks to know God's Word. When Paul taught in Berea, Acts 17:11 says they searched the Scriptures daily to see if what he was saying was accurate. That verse describes them as being noble or honorable because of their diligence.

About the only thing I remember from Algebra is that if $A=B$ and $B=C$ then $A=C$. So if A is their teaching and B is their conduct and C is the Scripture, if their teaching and conduct didn't line up with Scripture then the answer is wrong. Peter even says that what they taught and how they lived didn't line up, let alone matching Scripture.

Chapter 2 serves as a warning to diligently watch out for false teachers. Their teaching leads to destruction not only for them but for those who are duped into following them. Don't be fooled by charlatans. It all leads to Peter's conclusion in chapter 3 as he talks about an event that is yet future and that is the Day of the Lord, an event he wants his readers to be ready for.

Turn to II Peter 3:1-2.

We note first Peter's affection is certain.

I. PETER'S AFFECTION IS CERTAIN – v. 1a

“Dear friends”

To begin with, it’s a term of term of endearment.

A. It’s A Term Of Endearment

“Dear friends” is how it reads in the NIV, the NLT, and the Message.

In the KJV, NASV, the Amplified and the ESV it is translated “Beloved”.

That’s the term I prefer. In the Greek it’s the word *agapantos* from the root word *agapaw*. Peter uses it as a term of deep affection. Why else would he show such concern for their spiritual well-being? The word *agapantos* is a perfect passive participle. The English language doesn’t have this form of grammar but in Greek it is taking a verb to describe something that happened to a noun in the past tense making it a completed action. In this case Peter takes the believers, that’s the noun, and love, that’s the verb and describes the action that resulted and is still the case in the present. They are beloved. It refers to someone who is esteemed or worthy of love or someone who is a favorite.

For Peter it’s a name of endearment.

If you are married you might have names of endearment for a spouse.

If you have children, even pets you might have names of endearment for them as well.

We might call our spouse dear or honey or darling or sweetheart or poochykins or something like that.

“Hey you” is not a term of endearment.

It is a term Peter will use four times in this closing chapter, one that demonstrates his deep affection for these believers as he reminds them to hang in there because the Lord is returning.

“Beloved” is a term of endearment.

I also see this as a term of empathy.

B. It’s A Term of Empathy

Empathy is the ability to feel or understand the experience of someone else from their perspective. It’s the ability to put yourself in their shoes because you have been through the same thing. Empathy is different from sympathy.

Empathy says I feel your pain.

Sympathy says I’m sorry you’re in pain.

Empathy has been where you are.

Sympathy can only see you where you are because it has never been there.

Someone has described empathy as seeing with the eyes of another; listening with the ears of another; and feeling with the heart of another.

When we look at both letters of Peter, we see his empathy. He could interject himself into their position because he had also been in the same boat. He knew the fragility of faith, when everything around seemed to want to squeeze it from them. He knew the pain of persecution. He had been thrown into prison and beaten for his faith. He would soon know the extent of persecution when he is crucified upside down for being a Jesus follower. He knew the challenge of facing false teachers when Judaizers came to Jerusalem insisting that Christians must also follow the Old Testament law.

He completely understood the plight of these believers knowing full well what they were going through. He could speak from the heart. We’re more likely to listen and pay attention to someone who’s been in our shoes, who can identify with what we are going through.

In writing to the Corinthians Paul has this to say: II Corinthians 1:3-4 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion, and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

You aren’t the only person who has gone through or

is going through a hardship. Name it and someone has gone through it before you. So let me encourage you that if you have gone through something and hear of someone else going through the same or similar thing come alongside them because you can empathize with them. Peter could be empathetic with them because he had been through it before. I think a term like “beloved” expresses that great empathy and in that concern the term also speaks of encouragement.

C. It's A Term Of Encouragement

It's encouraging to know someone is right beside us when you're going through a trial. Peter was right there with them. The dictionary defines it as the act of giving someone support, confidence or hope.

These believers were experiencing persecution from without and false teachers from within. They may have been ready to throw in the towel and call it quits. Mounting pressure can be a heavy burden physically, emotionally and spiritually.

We know a couple from Russia who was recently in the US and had a chance to talk briefly with them about the struggles of being a Christian in that country, especially with some of the recent changes to religious freedom. A number of years ago she was in the US to study and earn her degree. She returned to Russia, got married and now is raising a family. They are talking about returning to the US for a couple years just to be fed spiritually because they feel so spiritually deprived and dry in Russia.

We need encouragement.

Paul gave an injunction to the Thessalonians: “Encourage one another and build each other up.” (I Thessalonians 4:11)

In 5:14 he wrote: “encourage the disheartened”.

It means to be discouraged, depressed, or distressed.

If we are honest we have all been there at one time or another. It's a fact of life.

There's more month than money.

Our job isn't going well.

There's tension at home.

Those who have been through a divorce know it.

Those who have lost a job know it.

Those who have lost a loved one know it.

Those who have chronic illness or who have sustained a life altering injury know it.

We pray and we get no answer.

We wonder if God is out there.

We wonder if God sees or knows our pain or hears our plea or is concerned about our plight.

Isaiah 40:25-31

Psalm 55:22 “Give your burdens to the Lord and He will take care of you. He will not allow the godly to slip and fall.”

These “beloved” readers needed encouragement.

Peter could empathize and he could encourage.

Some of you need a word of encouragement today.

Some of you need a word of hope today.

Some of you need confidence today.

God knows.

God sees.

God cares.

Trust Him.

Believe Him.

Find comfort in Him.

Find courage to keep going through Him.

Remember that Peter wrote in his first letter that these trials won't last forever.

His affection for them is certain.

The second thing from this passage I notice is that Peter's appeal is challenging

II. PETER'S APPEAL IS CHALLENGING –

v. 1b

We hear about appeals in the news when someone finds a court ruling not to their liking in some circumstances they can appeal to a higher court.

That means they can ask for a review of the evidence and pending conviction. The word can also mean to make an urgent request.

In this case Peter is appealing to his readers to review what he has already written. We could even say that under the circumstances it's an urgent request on his part that they dust off the other letter for a refresher on what he wrote.

So the first thing we see is that he appeals to his written letter.

A. He Appeals To His Written Letter

“This is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders.”

We just concluded a very lengthy process of confirming an appointee to the open seat on the Supreme Court. When it comes to Judge Kavanaugh's qualifications, the Senate Judiciary Committee referred back to some 300 opinions he wrote about various issues. They wanted to see where he stood on those issues to how he might rule according to the Constitution when it comes to cases that would be heard by the Supreme Court.

For what they were going through Peter says to them, “take a look at what I have written to help you through what you're going through.”

That's why I'm glad God gave us His written word, so that I don't have to try and remember. I can go back and read it for myself. I don't want to rely on my rememberer because it gets muddled with other stuff. Does anyone else share my pain?

Some people have a memory like a trap door and they can keep a lot of stuff stored up in the old noodle and remember. But I have to write it down.

We get emails from David's teachers about projects that are due with information we need to know to

help the student meet deadlines. David may hear something in class or interpret what he heard in class that isn't what was in the email. We're able to pull up the email and either confirm or correct to meet the deadline requirements of the project.

But just why is Peter appealing to his previous letter? What is his motivation for having them review what he wrote earlier? It's an appeal to their way of life.

B. He Appeals To Their Way Of Life

“I have written both as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.”

The ESV puts it this way: “I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.”

The word sincere means to be wholehearted or genuine and emphasizes the absence of hypocrisy or embellishment.

In Greek the word meant sun-judged. Merchants would fill a crack in a clay jar with wax in order to sell it. To see if it was 'sincere', a buyer would hold the jar up to the sun. The sun would reveal if it was eilikrines - genuine or sincere – because it had been sun-judged.

Peter wrote to stimulate or stir them to wholesome, sincere, genuine or right thinking. He is once again arousing them to godly living by standing in the truth, which he assured them in 1:13 that they were doing.

Here's a thought from Bruce Barton that bears some consideration: “The thinking and intentions of God's people must be able to stand up under scrutiny and not be led astray by immoral desires.”

On Wednesday night we have been talking about the practical application of justification. Justification is that one time act on God's part

where in a judicial sense because of our faith in Christ based on His finished work on the cross God renders us not guilty. He sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ and therefore can only bring one verdict and that is 'not guilty'. He sees us as He sees Christ.

Romans 5:1-6 (Isaiah 53:11)

If we are at the same time declared not guilty and righteous in our position or standing before God what then is our response or our practice?

It's really about aligning how we live before God with how we are seen by God.

Peter is writing to stimulate wholesome, sincere or right thinking. How do we do that?

Romans 12:1-2

In this passage Peter suggests a couple things that we can do.

1. We are to be a living sacrifice or to put it another way – die to self. Because we are now the temple of God through the presence of the Holy Spirit living in us we are to yield ourselves to be His servants, doing His will, obeying His commands instead of doing only what we want. To be a living sacrifice we must die to self.

2. We are to live a life that is holy to God, one that is acceptable to God. In the Old Testament, any animal that had a blemish was not acceptable as a sacrifice to God. If we are to be a living sacrifice that is acceptable to God we need to strive to be holy. We do this as an act of worship because bringing one's sacrifice to the altar was worship. So when we give ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice we are worshipping God.

3. We are to avoid conforming to the world. John says we aren't to love the world's system, it's allurements of things that are sinful. Paul says we aren't to practice the old nature, but instead practice the new nature, the character traits that exhibit a changed heart by becoming like Christ in character.

4. We are to transform our mind.

II Corinthians 10:5

Philippians 4:8

Just how do we do that?

a. We transform the mind by the Word of God

1) Regularly hear the Word – Romans 10:14-17

Folks, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to regularly hear God's Word. We wouldn't think of missing a meal or going a day without eating something unless we're sick or fasting. So what makes us think that we can skip regularly eating from God's Word and staying spiritually healthy?

2) Intentionally read the Word – Revelation 1:3

3) Diligently study the Word – Acts 17:11

4) Systematically memorize the Word – Psalm 119:9, 11

5) Thoroughly meditate on the Word – Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3

So, just how important is God's Word to you?

Jeremiah 15:16 "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my soul, for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts."

Job 23:12 "Neither have I gone back from the command of His lips, I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

b. We transform the mind by prayer

Philippians 4:6-8

There is a direct correlation between what we think about and the level of either anxiety or peace. If we think about things that are lovely and pure and so on, then we will give all our cares to God in prayer and He in turn gives us His peace that guards our heart and mind from the things that would otherwise

cause anxiety. The peace we encounter through the prayers we offer help to transform the mind.

If we think about things that cause us to worry, then we will not experience the peace of God.

Prayer can transform our thinking so that we experience and receive the peace of God.

Isaiah 26:3 “Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed (continued, remained, fixed, settled) on Thee (God) because he trusteth in Thee.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not in thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

c. We transform the mind by fellowship

Proverbs 17:17 “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

There is something to be said about fellowship that encourages us and holds us accountable to godly living. Show me a person who distances himself from fellowship with believers and I will show you a person who, in time, will stray from the Lord. We need each other.

Peter wrote to stimulate them to wholesome thinking. It can’t be done apart from time in God’s Word, prayer, and fellowship. All three are essential if we want to stand against false teachers and ungodly living.

Peter’s appeal is challenging.

Why is it that he can say what he does?

It’s because Peter’s authority is conclusive.

III. PETER’S AUTHORITY IS CONCLUSIVE – v. 2

In this verse he cites three sources of authority. They fall in chronological order. He bases his appeal on the conclusive authority of the prophets; the conclusive authority of the Lord; and the conclusive authority of the apostles.

A. The Conclusive Authority of the Prophets

‘Don’t just take my word for it folks’, he’s saying, ‘go back and read about it for yourselves in the Old Testament. Those writers said the same thing. Listen and follow them.’ We already noted in 1:20-21 that the Old Testament writers were inspired by God to write what they did.

What Peter will shortly be writing about has to do with the Day of the Lord. The Old Testament prophets had plenty to say about that.

Jude 14-15 “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’”

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, and Zechariah all talk about the end days when God pours out His wrath.

Because of their authority the word of the prophets is conclusive. So is the authoritative word of Christ.

B. The Conclusive Authority of Jesus

He talked about the Day of Judgment in Matthew

24 and 25. The Word who became flesh, God Himself certainly has authority to speak. On several occasions we read that when the crowds heard Jesus they were amazed because He spoke with authority and not as the religious leaders.

The power of His authority is seen when He spoke and the worlds were created out of nothing.

The power of His authority is seen when He spoke in the Garden of Gethsemane and everyone fell backward in awe.

The power of His authority is seen when He spoke and demons fled, the diseased were cured and the blind, deaf, lame, and dumb were healed.

The power of His authority is seen when He spoke and people were forgiven.

Peter tells us the authority of Jesus is conclusive, and so is the authority of the apostles.

C. The Conclusive Authority of the Apostles

In Matthew 28 Jesus said that all authority had been given to Him. He then passed that authority on to the apostles to act and speak on His behalf. They were His representatives on earth. When they spoke it was as if Jesus was speaking. False teachers might make that claim as the false prophets did in the Old Testament. If their word didn't come true they were not a true prophet of God and didn't speak for God.

The conclusive nature of what Peter is saying rests authority of the Old Testament writers, Christ Himself, and the apostles.

Let me conclude with something the Apostle Paul said that summarizes nicely Peter's thoughts in vs. 1-2. We find them in his letter to the Philippians. "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes

through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.

(Philippians 1:9-11)

When a warning comes across the radio or TV or new phone we are given instructions to follow. The warnings we receive from time to time are meant to help us prepare for danger that may be coming.

Peter also gives us instruction on what to do. He has written to stimulate us to wholesome thinking. What he has to say is an important message. Paul told us that godly living is a way of giving glory and praise to God.

Communion is a great time to pause and reflect to see if there is any course correction that needs to be made in our walk with Christ. Let's take a moment of introspection and confession before we take communion.

(Communion slide)