

Roy's Sermon for May 8, 2022

Remember The Commands In These Days Of Scoffing!

Last time in 2 Peter we looked at chapter 2:17- 3:2. 'The Character of Evil, and Sincere In our Faith'. Verse 17b: "Blackest darkness" (meaning moral and spiritual gloom) is reserved for these who bend God's Truth. Verse 18: "They appeal to the lustful desires of sinful human nature." "They entice people. Verse 14: "seducing unstable souls."

I explained that this can be applied to both knew converts and those who are new in their understanding. And I said, sadly, that a lot of modern preaching does this very thing. It "appeals to the lustful desires of sinful human nature." So, not the Cross, not the shed blood of Jesus Christ unto salvation, but the earthly rewards of the flesh in the here and now! "Father forgive me for I am the sinner" seems to be missing in action today!

Verse 19: Those who were enslaved by sin were promising freedom to others. It makes no sense, and of course it is a deception. Only He who has the key can free us from our chains! In v20-21: those three keywords: "*miasmata*" that decomposing of our lives; "*empakw*" lives embraided within the world and "*epignosis*", meaning the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ! Yes the unsaved person's life is decomposing in the sight of God and they are embraided within the anti-Christ spirit of the world. Until by God's grace and mercy, the "full knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" through the Holy Spirit sets us free!

These deceivers have all the appearances of the sheep, and yet they have never had the Blood of Jesus applied to their souls! V22 They are "dogs returning to their vomit", "sows returning to their wallowing." Yes, in reality they are the eternally unwashed. The untouched by God's Spirit and can't but help returning to that which they are by nature.

In Chapter 3:1 Peter wants to "rouse in us a sincere mind by way of reminding." That wonderful word "sincere." Not assumed or merely professed but moved by. As the scripture says, "be not only hearers of the word, but doers also." Not only a profession of the lips, but the genuine response within our lives!

Finally v2, the scriptures are the key to it all!

And so now we continue in the letter. 2 Peter 3:1-7: 'Remember The Command In These Days Of Scoffing!' Now, yes, we did look at these two verses last time, but there are some significant things that the Bible commentator Dick Lucas points out that are worth looking at. Chapter 3:1 "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to rouse in you a sincere mind." Now the first thing that Lucas points out is that after such a lengthy condemnation upon the character, and the warning of the evil intent of these false teachers, who had secretly slipped in among the brethren and the fledgling churches, the first words that Peter then uses in chapter 3:1, in contrast, almost leapt out at us from the pages. "Dear friends." In Greek the word is "*agaperto!*" and it means "beloved." Or beloved ones. And he uses these words four times throughout this chapter. V1 "Beloved ones, this is now my second letter to you." V8 "But do not forget this one thing beloved ones." V14 "So then beloved ones since you are looking forward to this." And V17 "Therefore beloved ones, since you already know this."

Peter uses this tender term of affection "*agaperetoi*," "beloved ones," to keep on reinforcing his connection with his hearers. To keep reminding them of the relationship between themselves and him, that had been built up over time in Christ!

And this I believe is important for us to understand, and for this simple reason. He is telling them that 'you know me! I am not someone who has just walked in off the street. You know that you can trust what I am telling you to be true. Because even as I have taught you, so those things have stood the test in our relationship over time'. Friends, (my own beloved ones) if we are going to seek to be an influence over people by pointing them to Jesus and ultimately unto salvation. Or if it is in a certain direction to influence them and guide them scripturally or theologically, it's something which we do over time, and not like a bull at a gate!

I have shared with you before that as a new convert, I was more than happy to belt people over the head with the wrath of God. And while I'm all for fire and brimstone preaching, (which is very much sadly so lacking today) there are times and seasons for using all upright deliverings of God's Word! Being heartless and insensitive toward our hearers, is never the right approach. "Speak the truth in love," Jesus said.

And that's what Peter does here. He had already spoken powerfully and vehemently against the deception at hand, and his condemnation of such people, and now it is with this tremendous contrast within this tender language, as he seeks to guide his children in the faith as it were! "Beloved," "Beloved," "Beloved," "Beloved." He has sounded the air raid warning sirens against falsehood, and now he speaks to them as their father in the faith with tender words of affection.

And what the commentator also explains is that the link between the two chapters is found in the word "command." Chapter 2:21 'It would be better for them to have not known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command.' Chapter 3:2 "I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles." And when he uses the word "command here," he means all of those things that pertain to Jesus. Even as the Lord did speak of Himself on the road to Emmaus.

In Luke 24:25-27 we read: "He said to them, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all of the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself." Yes that is what Peter means here by the "command." Those things of Jesus spoken in both the old and new testaments, which truly are the whole council of God to man, which also is ultimately the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Notice also that Peter says, "and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles." In doing this, he claims that which the apostles proclaimed, was as inspired as that word which the Old Testament prophets spoke, "as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" chapter 1:21. And friends notice also, that Peter calls them "your apostles." In Greek literally, "the apostles of you." Meaning that the apostles in effect belonged to his hearers. They too were part of the Work of Christ for His Kingdom. Yes as they belonged to Jesus, the apostles belonged to them. And to us also brothers and sisters.

Yes the link word is "command," but in the response of the two groups of people to that same word, we have the eternal contrast! The false teachers had "turned their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them." They were as "dogs returning to their vomit." And sows back to wallowing in the mud." And yet on the other hand, Peter wants his hearers to "recall the words of

the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles." Yes as I said last time, the key is the scriptures, (all of the scriptures) to standing firm!

Another thing that Peter does in this verse is prepare his hearers for the defence, which he is going to make in order to encourage the believers to remain firm! Again, notice that Peter calls them "your apostles," reminding them of that intimate relationship. These men are "your apostles," you know them and you can trust them. V3 "First of all. This is the exact same phrase in Greek which was used in verse 20 of chapter one. "Above all" or of the greatest of importance. Yes "First of all you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires."

But he doesn't mean in the future here, because they were already there. He means that such people, will continue to come! He's already used the words that these men were "appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature" in their falsifying and twisting of God's Word, now, it is "following their own evil desires." Now yes friends this is speaking of these false teachers, but as it came out at Bible study, we can see this as two fold, as it's reflected in the world in general! "Scoffing and following their own evil sinful desires." Think of that yearly celebration of Sodomy and sexual perversion in Sydney, where the depravity of humanity is lauded and cheered on every year. And for many years the head of Fred Nile was symbolically mocked and ridiculed as it was carried on a platter by these deviants through the streets!

And then think of the great parallels with the death of John the Baptist (not just the cousin) but the herald of Christ, whose head also was paraded before the king to the cheers of the crowd. Think also of the token Christian on one of those panel type shows on the ABC. As soon as they open their mouth in the defence of the scriptures, (that is if indeed they are bold enough to do so) the jeers and scoffing's that come from the audience. The ridicule that is aimed at those who hold to a six day creation as opposed to evolution.

And as I shamefully reflect back upon my own years in high school. When a guy who was the only overtly Christian person that I knew of Glen Renton, suffered at the hands of an increasingly cruel youth! And what of those who claim Jesus overtly, and stand for parliament, when being bold enough to do so? What kind of reception do they receive at the hands of the world? I can't but help to again think of Fred Nile. He was the man that everyone I knew and grew up with would trash. But year after year, Fred went on unashamedly standing up for Jesus. Whether it was standing in those streets and praying for those who carried his head on a platter, or having every political position that he put forward for family and decency, (even for Christ) ridiculed. Yes Fred would always stand in the front lines calling people to Jesus. We love you Fred!

Yes "first of all you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, (remember not in the future but continually come and come against us) scoffing and following their own evil desires. V4 "They will say, where is this coming he promised?" Friends Can you imagine? In their defence of an erroneous scriptural position, people called into question the very Word of the God of the universe. "Where is this coming he promised?" Yes "where is this coming Jesus promised?"

In Matthew 24:36-42 we read, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field, one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be

grinding with a hand mill, one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

"Where is this coming?" Yes our Lord spoke of His coming and that we should "keep watch." But the charge and the challenge that these people, (and indeed that the whole world in effect makes) is "where is this coming he promised?" It's very similar in nature to "He saved others but he can't save himself." And "Come down from the cross and will believe in you." That is if you really are the Son of God."

Brothers and sisters, how brave people are when they see Jesus upon the Cross. When they believe that the power is in their own hands. As if they are the masters of their own destiny! Yes "Where is this coming he promised?" Here we can see that clearly, this mockery is directed specifically at the very Word of God and the veracity of its truth. "Where is this coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." Why speak of sin and judgement and the return of some king? All is right with the universe as it has always been. Nothing has changed. Eat drink and be merry!

And friends let's remember that Peter is actually playing devil's advocate here. Yet now he speaks of the reality. V5 "But they deliberately forget, (or perhaps it's better understood as in Romans 1"18-19 "For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppressed the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them." They suppressed the truth, they "deliberately forget that long ago by God's Word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water." So these guys are supposed to be your teachers, Peter is saying. And they are saying that everything just continues on in the way it always has done. So nothing changes.

Is that what they're saying? Well, actually no, it's not true. Let's examine the facts! For a start, out of nothing, yes (ex nihilo) God spoke the heavens into being. And the earth too was brought about by His Word. John 1:1-5 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made without him nothing was made that has been made, in him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." It "was formed out of water Genesis 1:9, "and by water" Genesis 1:6, and Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created."

Is it that these founts of all knowledge don't even know the most basic beginnings of the scriptures? Oh but it's far worse than that, Peter says. They "deliberately forget," yes they "suppress the truth." Beloved, what has Peter's goal been all the way through this letter? Remind. Refresh. Recall. Remember. Rouse! It's a warning against falsehood and an encouragement to stay the course by "remembering" God's Word, all of God's Word. Furthermore, Peter argues, to smash their folly, v6 "By the same waters also, the world of that time was deluged and destroyed."

So friends if the question be asked; Has the world continued as it always has been since the beginning of time and the very first day without interruption? The answer is no. What of that tsunami that killed 200,000 people some years ago? The first plague of influenza that killed 100 million people. What of the Ukraine? Is it going on as it always had even today? No. And what of the recent floods and the worldwide pandemic?

Yes things are returning but they are not the same. Nor will they ever be. They are not the same for families who have lost loved ones and livelihoods. It's a nonsensical vainglorious statement to make. It shows the vanity and infantile nature of those who were supposed to be teachers. The whole world was destroyed by the flood. It could never be exactly as it was before! What is interesting

today brothers and sisters, is that humanity in its argument against and denial of God's Sovereignty, Word, and Rule in the world. Is saying that the world is going to fall apart, the climate is changing. If we don't do something about it and fix it we are all lost! Both positions are a denial of God's universal Rule and Sovereignty over all things. One mocks the existence and the veracity of His Word, while the other denies His very existence! One is saying that the world never changes, while the other is saying the world is ever changing, it's our fault, and it is out of control, and if we don't fix it all is lost! Now friends yes, it is true that it is our fault, the world is decaying because of sin. But the idea that we can reverse the effects of man within the world, is madness. The problem is not the climate, the problem is sin! Man's rebellion against and rejection of God and His Truth, His Word! In Romans 8:20-23 we read. "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who had the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Yes, it is interesting that mankind now sees a problem. But they see it as an external one. Whereas the reality is, it is an internal problem. Our broken relationship with God because of sin! Yes, through God's spoken Word Genesis 1:3 "and God said let there be light," the universe and the world came into being. V7 "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgement and destruction for ungodly men." Again Beloved, these things are not politically popular things to speak of today, even within the church. It's as though since we are saved, we no longer need to hear about sin. If that is indeed the case, why is Peter writing these his final words about sin? And indeed, warning them of the coming judgement. Look at what he says "By the same word, (the word of God through Jesus John 1, and "The spirit of God hovering over the waters" v2 of Genesis 1, yes "by the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire." In the words of the old hymn. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. Beloved we might not see it this way, (and while we don't take any joy in the loss of men's souls) but the judgement of God will be glorious! When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more and the morning breaks eternal bright and fair, when the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore, and the roll is called up Yonder I'll be there. Praise God! But dear friends when the trumpet sounds, the wrath of God will fall and time will be no more. Yes, with our resurrection there will come the destruction of all things. There will be "a new heaven and a new earth." Now what form this will take I'm not going to speculate; I will leave that for others. All I do know, is that the old will pass away and that they are" reserved for fire." As I have mentioned before, God's mercy is always found in the midst of His wrath! Yes, we are glory bound, but there is an unimaginable destruction that's coming. Such as which the universe has never known, nor will it ever see again for all of eternity. Yes, there is a reservation that has been made by God. But we don't want to be at that party Beloved. That day has been booked by God. The names on the guest list have been reserved by God. And He has kept a record of all of those, who will be forced to attend! It is the day of reckoning. The great day of the Lord, and who can stand? We will look more at that next week. So how do we bring these things together this morning? Well by simply pointing out that we are living in the last days. Those days began when Jesus rose from the grave. And as in those days, we too live in the days of mockers! Yes, ridicule and derision are the spirits of this age. The world mocks what we believe. How we believe. And in whom we hold that belief. But this shouldn't surprise us, knowing what they did to our King! What we are called to do, is to "Remember the Command" in these days of scoffing. Yes "Remember the Command." That whole council of God, as those things point us toward, and confirm our faith in Jesus! While we pray always, Come Lord Jesus Come! Let's pray!