



2 Peter 1:12-21 Stirred Up Faith

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
www.calvarydcmetro.org

In high school, most of my friends and I were getting our licenses at the same time. And, you know how guys are – they tend to goof around and harass each other, in love. So we used to honk at each other all the time, like, “get out of my way!”

Well, we were on our way to school one morning, and I was driving by myself down Florida Avenue, the main street in town and I was waiting at a red light to make a left hand turn down Santa Fe toward the school.

Two of my good friends, twins, came up behind me and when the light turned green they honked at me – like, “get out of my way, let’s go!” Now, I could see that there was a car coming from the opposite direction, but I knew my friends were honking at me and I knew I had a green light, so I floored it and went, thinking “well, the guy in the oncoming lane is going to have to stop for me.”

While I gunned it and made my turn the guy slammed on his brakes and honked at me in order to avoid slamming into me. I thought – wow, what a crazy driver that guy is! But when my friends caught up with me at school, they were like, “wow, dude you almost got into an accident – you’ve got to be more careful.” And I was like, “What are you talking about? I had a green light, that other guy was crazy.” And that was when they reminded me of the difference between a green light and a green turn arrow. I pretty much felt like an idiot and was thankful that I and the other driver survived.

I thought I knew what I was doing, but I had forgotten a small, but important detail and forgetting nearly had disastrous consequences.

Now, let me ask you a question. Do you ever feel spiritually dry? Dull? Like, “I know other people talk a lot about how great it is to know God, but I’m just not feeling it?” Or, “why isn’t Christ as central to my life as He was at one point?” “Why isn’t church as important to me as it used to be?”

Well, this morning might help you. Remember, what we’re reading is a letter that Peter wrote to early Christians to remind them of two very important things: *what* they had in Jesus and *how* they should respond, and the purpose of reminding them of these things was to stir them up in their faith.

So let’s read these four verses.

[12](#) For this reason [which refers us back to verses 3-11 which show us what we have received in Christ, and because following Peter’s seven step plan that we discussed last week will keep us from stumbling] 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.

Now, there's a whole lot that stands out to me here, and I hope some of it will be of assistance to you.

The first thing I notice is that even the early Christians needed reminding of what they had and who they were. He uses the word "remind" three times in these four sentences, which is something that has always grabbed my attention when I read this book. He says, "I know you know these things, but I'm going to remind you anyway because the consequences of forgetting are severe."

He's not alone in saying these kinds of things – the authors of the New Testament talk about reminding us of things – not teaching new things, REMINDING us of things they have already said, over 15 times.

You may still remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians in 3:1 "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe."

Now, I'll tell you something that is encouraging to me about that – it means there's really not a lot of material to master – the message of the Bible is not really all that complex – In essence it is this: God is holy and perfect, but we are not, in fact, we rebel against Him and His laws all the time and because He is just, we should be punished for our rebellion. BUT He is also merciful and loving, and *for those who will accept it*, He has also offered a way of forgiveness and restoration through His Son Jesus who came to earth, died on the cross and rose from the grave to bring us newness of life. The rest is really just details built around that. So, the plot isn't complex, it's just that it's so significant.

Yet apparently, since the very first days of the church, or I would argue since the very first days of Creation, we have all been prone to inattention or spiritual amnesia when it comes to the most important matters of life. Our most priceless possession can become covered by a layer of dust just like anything else in our lives. Spiritual truth is not immune to neglect, if anything, it's even more susceptible. As a result, we often need to be reminded of things – even seemingly small details, because they can turn out to have a significant impact.

And then, did you notice that he says, in verse 15, "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease." Peter wanted to make sure they still had a reminder around even after he was gone so he took the time to put it down in ink. What that implies is that not only did his readers need a reminder right now, *they would need one again later!* In other words, this tendency toward forgetfulness of spiritual matters or distraction from them is a life long plague for us. There's no getting over it, our only hope is to stay aware of it and take measures to insure against it.

So, watch out for the tendency to think, “Oh I know all of this already. I’ve heard all of this before.” According to Scripture, there is value in our hearing things again, and again. And, just because you know something, doesn’t mean you fully understand it, right? There is a difference between knowing something in your head, and understanding it with your heart, and even then, there’s a difference from doing it in your life.

Peter knew this, and knew it well. In fact, did you catch it when Peter said he would be *negligent* if he didn’t remind them? Negligent is a word we typically associate with criminal behavior – you neglected something you had a responsibility for, and now you can be sued or arrested. Obviously, Peter is taking this pretty serious.

So he wants to remind us, but not just that, he wants to remind us of what we already know **in order to** stir us up. This term “stir up” is powerful! It’s used in other places to describe arousing love.

Song of Solomon 8:4 “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases.” And the love being spoken of is that powerful, intoxicating, infatuation type of love between a young man and a young woman who are just discovering that they might be made for each other.

It’s also used to describe men preparing for war:

Isaiah 42:13 “The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up [His] zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.”

It’s even used in the New Testament to describe the raging of the sea when a storm comes.

So, there’s a passionate, a severe, almost a violent kind of feel to it. And this is the answer to our problem of being sedated and passive spiritually. It’s like a defibrillating shock to wake you up.

Sometimes, when a fire has nearly burned out, you can go back to it and stir up the ashes, or the coals, maybe even knock some of the burnt pieces off a larger chunk of wood and find some coals still lingering. And if you stir those things up and add more fuel, you can often revive the fire. That’s what Peter wants to do in our spiritual lives. He wants to stir up the coals and add some more fuel.

So, being ‘stirred up’ is the answer to our problem, but let’s take a few minutes and ask the not-so-obvious question: why do we need to be stirred up in the first place? Why is it that sometimes we just don’t “feel” God like we have in the past? Or why don’t you “feel” Him in the way you hear others talk about. I have two caveats for you and then few considerations.

Caveat Number One: some people are just more emotional than others. These people are obviously going to have a different reaction to their relationship with God than you are if

you aren't an emotional kind of person. Neither of you is right, or wrong, you're just different in how you respond. Now, everyone should "feel" something about God – you don't have to gush with affection, but you should emote in some way – you "feel" for some things, God should be one of them but there is no emotional standard that you have to reach in order to *truly* love God.

Caveat Number Two: sometimes, as you grow in your relationship with God, you go through seasons where He is more silent than you would like Him to be. Now, it's been my observation that these seasons usually come after a season of instruction. He shows you something you need to do, or a direction you need to head, He teaches you an important lesson, and then He says, "Now go do it. Work it out. When it's time to change course, or when you need a new piece of data, I'll give it you. Until then, stay the course." It's part of the maturing process – as any child grows they need less and less direct, intense, and frequent direction from their parent. You direct a toddler in a different manner than a teenager.

So, those are our two caveats – maybe you're just not that emotional in the first place, and maybe God has already shown you what to do and is walking you through a season of maturing.

With those in the back of our mind, let's consider some other reasons why we find ourselves needing to be stirred in the first place.

First of all, you have to make sure you're saved. There is a world of difference between knowing about God and knowing Him personally. You may have grown up around church, maybe even attended church on occasion with your parents, or grandma, or friend. Maybe you know about God, you even read the Bible sometimes, maybe you try to come to church when you can – you know about God, about Jesus, about the Bible.

But have you ever said, "Yes, I know all of this, and now I accept it and submit to it? And by God's grace and with His strength, I'm going to try to live this way."

THE central question in our lives is not *what* do we know; it's *who* do we serve. God isn't concerned as much about what you know as He is with whom you obey.

So, do you live life your way, or do you live life His way? That's the problem. It's not that people don't know enough about God, it's that they don't obey what they do know.

So, if you haven't submitted to Him, if you've just been learning about Him, then it's no surprise that you don't feel any real strong compulsion to obey Him. Instead of having a real fire burning in your spiritual life, maybe what you have is just *a picture of a fire burning* with good crackling sound effects. It might look nice, but it doesn't produce any heat.

And something similar applies to the lives of believers. Maybe the reason your walk with God isn't as vibrant as you would hope is because you're torn between wanting your own

way and wanting God's way. He's shown you something He wants done or changed and instead of carrying it out, you have been **resisting**. That will kill your relationship every time. Knowledge and obedience are the two sources of fuel for your spiritual fire – if you aren't adding those logs, your flames are eventually going to die out.

Then there are times when we aren't actively resisting the Lord; we're just **neglecting** Him. You're distracted by other things, too many other opportunities or needs in your life, so it's easy to put off spending any time with God. After all, you're really going to try to make it to church this Sunday, right?

You can run errands all day in your car – Saturday rolls around and you finally have the chance to do things that have been piling up on your to-do list all week. So you hop in your car and go out and start driving around. Now in your car you are fortunate enough to have two things you don't have in your walk with God – a fuel gauge, so you can see how much gas you have, and a low fuel light to let you know, "Hey, you're pushing this a little too far."

Now, it's easy to keep driving around from place to place, fighting traffic and parking lots, and doing your thing. And although you're getting a lot of stuff done, you're also consuming your fuel. At some point you're going to have to stop "making progress" or "getting things done" in order to refuel. It would be pretty silly to run out of gas just so you could make one more stop. It doesn't feel immediately productive to stop and get gas, but you see how you can't press on without it.

We could say something similar about skipping lunch – you can get busy and skip lunch, you can press on through it, but you know your body's blood sugar is dropping and that has an impact on your brain's ability to function – so even though you are still moving, you're actually slowing down and losing effectiveness. It would be better to stop, refuel your body, let your mind rest for a minute and then come back fresh.

In the physical world there is no such thing as a perpetual motion machine – you don't just get energy out of nowhere. You need energy to make energy – if you want to produce electricity you start by burning coal, or using wind, water, or sun, or nuclear technology – but you always start by putting something in before you get something out. The same is true in our spiritual lives – you need some fuel to run on, and that fuel comes through being reminded of truth.

Here's where we should talk about the old white dog, black dog analogy too. But instead of using two dogs, we'll stick with our fuel analogy and say you have **two engines** inside you – one that propels you in a selfish direction, the other that propels you toward God. Which one are you pouring fuel into?

One of the greatest threats to our walk with God is worldliness – much of the world around you, much of the books, movies, advertisements, TV shows, and music you see, hear, and read, is headed in a direction away from God. It's entirely possible that you are your own worst enemy when it comes to your lack of spiritual strength. You aren't as strong as you

wish, or as close to God as you wish, because you're dulling your own appetite for things of God by all the other junk you're taking in.

One final reason why we need to be stirred up – sometimes we lose our **perspective**, and we start to look at God through our problem instead of looking at our problem through God. We think about it first instead of Him. And then we start to think we're left here to face this all alone, and we're not. Remember what happened with Peter on the water? Do you remember how he got out of the boat and walked on water for a minute with Jesus? But what happened then? He took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the waves and immediately he began to sink. Fortunately, Jesus took hold of him and pulled him back up.

Look, sometimes you'll be cruising along in life with no problems at all, thinking everything is groovy, and then, out of nowhere, a tidal wave will smack into you – if you focus on the storm first, it'll quench your fire. If, on the other hand, you focus on the God who you know can save you from the storm, the waves might smack you around a little bit, but you'll be on top of them instead of under them and that makes a world of difference.

So, for various reasons, we need to be stirred up – maybe because we only know *about* God instead of really submitting to Him, or maybe because we're resisting Him, or neglecting Him, maybe we're fueling the wrong engine, or maybe we've lost our perspective. Regardless of how we got here – the answer is still the same – we need to be stirred up. And that stirring comes *by being reminded of who Jesus is and how we should respond* – things we have already learned but which we may have forgotten.

There are three ways we do that:

- by hearing from God – sometimes He is speaking your name, pointing things out to you, and you just need to listen
- by hearing from others – Peter says, I want to remind you, of things you already know, because I think they're important. Listen to things godly people around you have to say.
- by speaking to yourself – the Psalms especially are full of examples of saying to yourself, “wake up! Remember the Lord and what He has done!”

I hope that you would take a minute as we close with this last song, to ask God – what's up? Do I need to be stirred up? Is anything causing me to stagnate in my walk? How can I add more fuel to the fire of my relationship with You?

Or to assess – do you even have a relationship with God? Do I know things about Him, or have I really met Him?

Peter says Jesus is the source of the grace and peace we are looking for. And that He has already given to us all that we need for life and godliness. So let's remember these things, and even better, let's act on them.