

29th April 'The Path to Truth' 2 Peter 1:12-2:22

Background information:

'2 Peter dwells on the great hope of the return of Christ, so as to warn the false teachers and challenge the waverers.' Page 19 *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, Michael Green.

Peter is focused on false teachers and the truth. Commentators think it is likely that the false teaching he had in mind was Gnostic – teaching which has an emphasis on knowledge as the way to salvation, and a division between physical and spiritual (an idea which is exploited to excuse sin, especially sexual sin).

Basic structure of the passage:

- **Vv 12-15 Remember what Peter has written about in vv 1-11**, in particular that 'His divine power has given us everything needed for life and **godliness**, through the **knowledge of him** who called us by his own glory and goodness.' (verse 3)
- **Vv 16-21 These things are true; they are not myths about Jesus. The scriptures tell the truth (verses 19-21).**
- **2:1-22 Unlike the teaching and behaviour of false teachers**
 - **Various descriptions of what is dodgy about them**
 - **They will be punished by God for this (verses 1, 3, 9, 11, 12-13)**
 - **BUT the godly will be saved (verse 9 particularly, but see also references to the righteous in verses 5, 7-8)**
 - **Therefore, don't follow their teaching or their way of life (verse 3)**

Note about the study:

Because this is a massive passage, a large chunk of which deals with the same topic, it makes sense to split the group up into smaller groups at some stage. Give them a couple of verses to work through, and then report back to the whole group. It would just be too hard to try and get through the whole passage with the entire group in one big discussion. (Splitting the group up also has the advantage of evening out people's contributions; if you have people in the group who are very loud or very quiet, the structure should ensure that discussion is a bit more balanced.)

Questions to consider:

V 12 'These things'? What things?

Verses 12-15 Why is it important for them to be reminded, if they know them already?

(Think about our culture – it's a 'tell me something new' culture. That's how people assess talks they hear 'It was great because I'd never heard x before' or 'It wasn't that good – I already knew x'. Do we under-value being reminded?)

What do you need to be reminded of? (Look particularly to the things Peter reminds them of, but think also of other things that you 'forget' regarding faith)

Verses 16-21 What claims is Peter making about scripture? How is that relevant to what he is reminding them about?

(Note: there is a bit of confusion about what exactly is meant by verses 20-21. I think it's saying that the words *and* the meaning of prophecies were given to the prophets from God. That is, instead of them receiving a prophecy, and then having to work out what it meant by themselves, God also gave them the understanding.)

2:1-22 Break people into groups and get them to take a few verses each. Ask them to answer these questions: what is the problem, and what would it look like today?

Peter obviously takes false teaching (and ungodly living) very seriously. Why are these things such a problem?

How can we avoid being or following false teachers? (It could be helpful here to refer back to 2 Peter 1:1-11 which details an answer to this. See for example verse 8). Get people to be practical here.

Prayer:

Spend some time praying that we will avoid false belief and ungodly living. Thank God for the scripture which is true and reliable. Thank God for *good* teachers. Pray for the Bible teachers you know, and ask God to protect and direct them, to guard the teaching of this church.