Pay Attention to the Prophetic Message

2 Peter 1:12-21

Key Verse: 1:19 “We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart.”

 We live in a fast-moving and complicated world. We are so busy that we have to do several things at a time. So we often forget to do something important that needs to be done on time. Thank God for our smartphone which reminds us not to miss something important in our daily life. Reminding us of something important such as important promises, doctor’s appointment, job interview, carrying a passport before going to the airport, taking medication on time etc is not too much if we emphasize on.  In today’s passage Peter reminds Christians of several important things which they have to remember and keep. I pray that this message helps us to remember and renew our identity and God’s calling.

First, remind you of these things (12-15) When Peter wrote this letter, it was around AD 64-65 not long before he was martyred in Rome. He was like a father who left his will to his lovely children before he died. Peter wanted them to remember what was important to them. He repeated it so that they might not forget. What are they? Look at verses 12-15. “***So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.***” In these verses Peter repeated the same verb three times, “remind’, ‘refresh,’ and ‘remember.’ At that time Christians scattered around Asia Minor were suffering from persecution from outside and temptation from inside. We also often forget who we are when we are in a extremely difficult time. Our heart is stolen from problems and suffering themselves. Then, we forget and lose very important things which we must remember and keep.

 What are these things which they must always remember, refresh, and remind? They are God’s calling and election based on verse 10. Peter said in verses 10-11. “*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*.” God’s call is God’s special choice and invitation for his work, and election is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. We Christians have both God’s call and election. When we are elected and called, our identity is changed. In the past we were not a people, but now we are people of God through faith in Jesus Christ. More than this, we are a chosen people, royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s special possession who declare the praises of him. (1 Pe 2:9) No matter how busy we are, no matter how difficult our suffering we may go through, we must remember that we are a chosen people and royal priesthood. Amen! Peter asked Christians to remember and keep their identity as a chosen people and royal priesthood even though they suffered under persecution.

 This Friday I will leave for Canada to attend the East Canadian Conference, especially to support the workshop for the conference. The topic of the workshop is ‘God’s Call’. The coworkers in Ottawa and Montreal UBF acknowledged the importance of God’s call and identity as Christians and Bible teachers, especially among the growing second generation. In the Bible history, reminding children of their identity is very important. Moses wrote Deuteromny for their second generation who would enter the Promised Land. All the laws for the first generation were written in Exodus and Leviticus. The word “Deuteronomy" means ‘repetition of the law’. Moses’ law was written again for their children. Moses wanted his children to remember God’s law and to live as God’s people when they entered the Promised Land. Our children also often lose their identity as Christian and as citizens. Therefore it is not too much when we teach our children to keep their identity as a chosen people and a holy nation in this generation. How can we teach them to keep their identity as God’s people?

Second, remember your life testimony (16-18) While Jesus was alive, he took his three disciples, James, John, and Peter to a high mountain near Caesarea Philippi. On the mountain Jesus was transfigured. This story is written in the book of gospel. (Mt 17:1-13, Mk 9:2-13, Lk 9:28-36)        ) At that time Jesus was transfigured gloriously. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. (Mt 17:2) Before their eyes Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Peter was so fascinated by this spectacular scene, and he suggested to Jesus, “*Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters–one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.*” (Mk 9:5) Then suddenly a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “*This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!*” Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. Since then, Peter never forgot this spectacular and special moment in his lifetime. It became the parameter for his life and a clear life testimony in his gospel ministry.

 Now look at verses 16-18. “***For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard the voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.***” Not long after he wrote this letter, Peter was killed by the Romans. At that time, he was crucified upside down. He said, “I don’t deserve to be crucified as my Lord was. Nail me upside down!” How could Peter do so? How could he be crucified upside down? This is because he had the living hope of resurrection which never perishes, spoils or fades away but kept in heaven for him. Peter had resurrection hope through faith in Jesus Christ. He remembered how Jesus was transfigured gloriously and beautifully on the transfiguration mountain. His face was shining like the sun and his clothes were as white as light. So, Peter also desired to be resurrected like the Lord Jesus. Peter clearly remembered the moment of this spiritual experience with Jesus on the mountain. Do you have such a special and memorable moment which you experienced in your life? Do you have a clear life-testimony based on this kind of spiritual experience? They are many great servants of God who had and remembered this kind of life testimony. Martin Luther remembered the moment when God saved his life. On the way to the church he and his friend met a storm. His friend who was right next to him was struck by lightning and died. Martin was shocked and feared. He remembered this moment and decided to give his life to the Lord Jesus.

 It is very important to find Jesus in your life testimony. Remember what Jesus did for you when you were in trouble. Remember how Jesus rescued you and saved you when you were wandering in the darkness of sin. Remember how you experienced God’s wonderful grace and heavenly joy and peace when you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. These kinds of your life testimony become your parameter for your life as Jesus’ transfiguration became the parameter for Peter’s life. For the presentation for the workshop in Canada, I put my life-testimony in my presentation. It was the same one which I shared last Sunday here. I intentionally put my life-testimony there because life-testimony is the most powerful way to deliver a gospel message. God’s call and grace are not theory or doctrine. It is a documentary testimony which we experienced. Remember that Apostle Paul used his life-testimony and shared it wherever he went. His testimony appears three times in the book of Acts. (Ac 9:1-19, 22:6-21, 26:12-18) Make your life testimony if you don’t have it. And find Jesus there. Remember the beautiful moment which you shared with Jesus and reveal his glory and majesty. Jesus is the focal point and he is the one who should be revealed, proved, and glorified in your testimony. Glorify the name of Jesus in your life testimony. Amen!

Third, pay attention to the prophetic message (19-21) There is another way for us to keep our identity and remember God’s call and election. It is to pay attention to the prophetic message. What is the prophetic message? Look at verses 19-21. “***We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its own origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.***” The prophetic message is the word of God. It is all the Scriptures in the Old Testament, especially prophecies and promises about the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus said to the Pharisees in John 5:39, “*You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me*.” When Jesus was transfigured, two persons appeared and talked with Jesus. They are Moses and Elijah. Moses is the representative of the law, God’s promise, and Elijah is the representative of prophets, God’s prophecies. Their appearance is the endorsement that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Scriptures in the Old Testament as the Promised Messiah. We must pay attention to the word of God, especially when we are confused in finding our identity as people of God. We must go back to the Bible when we face challenges and dangers from this AI generation. Yesterday UBF had its 27th online forum titled, “*Having Christian ethics & perspective in the AI age*.” We shared the danger, challenge, and expectation from the age of AI (Artificial Intelligence) which comes like a tsunami. If we are not prepared for the coming age, we human beings will lose our identity as human beings. We will be confused between AI Robots like Sophia and a real person. Yesterday Pastor Ron Ward clearly delivered the message that we must stand firm against this ungodly atmosphere and fight a spiritual battle with the word of God. If we do not pay attention to the word of God, we will lose our spiritual battle. If we do not focus on Jesus, but are distracted by the excitement of technology, we will lose our identity as human beings.

 When we pay attention to the prophetic message, Jesus will shine in our dark heart and we will see the great light through him. 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, “*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.*” When we study the word of God and meditate on it, the light of Jesus shines our hearts and fills it with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Why do people wander here and there seeking for something to satisfy their soul? Why do some Christians waiver between God and the world? This is because they did not pay attention to Jesus. They lost points in their lives, so they wander in the darkness of sin. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*.” When we study the Bible, we must study until we find Jesus between the lines. All Scriptures, 39 books in the Old Testament talk about Jesus and were written about Jesus. Without Jesus there is no answer in understanding the prophetic messages.

In conclusion, we need reminders to help us to keep our identity as chosen people and royal priesthood. They are our life-testimony and words of God. We have lost our identity because of homosexuality. We will lose man-only or woman-only public restrooms. Soon we may lose our jobs, positions, and identity because of AI robots. We must pay attention to Jesus. We must go back to the Bible. We must make every effort to participate in the divine nature of Christ. This is the way for us to overcome this world! Amen!