

"I Stir Up Your Pure Minds"

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

SECOND PETER CHAPTER THREE

THE history of both Israel and Christianity plainly reveals to us the wilful forgetfulness of the natural man, teaching us in no uncertain terms that man is quick to forget what God has done for him in the past and what God has promised to do for him in the future on the earth.

It is no wonder that the recurring **exhortation** theme of the Scriptures is, "Remember." And God, Who is graciously plentiful in all His ways, has given us the benefits of yet another instructive theme, so that we can also say that the recurring **admonition** theme of the Scriptures is, "Forget Not."

CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FORGOT

AS AN almost unbelievable example, we have on record the attitude of the children of Israel after they were delivered from their bondage in Egypt. Though they believed and sang praises to God (Psalm 106:12), this was only short-lived, for the next 2 verses of this Psalm remind us that —

"They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert."

No, they did not long remember, but soon forgot, which was their national characteristic repeatedly manifested throughout their history. Another example of this is the command given by God to Israel (Ex. 20:8) —

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

The vast majority of them failed to remember. They forgot, and in the forgetting they profaned God's sabbaths.

CHRISTIAN ECCLESIAS FORGOT

AS with the congregations of Israel, so also with the Christian ecclesias: the exhortation to "Remember" and the admonition to "Forget Not" were not heeded for very long.

This is the continuing double-theme of exhortation and admonition from the Old to the New Testament dispensation. Over and over and in various ways we are instructed to remember and forget not, lest we also go astray from God's revealed Truth as others did.

We have the history of the Apostasy before us, proving that Christendom is astray from the teachings of the Bible both in doctrine and conduct. No examples are needed to indicate the contrast between what we believe and what Christendom believes on such vital Bible subjects as the soul, hell, the devil, the Kingdom of God, and even the Bible itself.

The Christian ecclesias did not remember, but forgot, resulting in their belief in lies and vanities and things wherein there is no profit, while still professing to be "Christians!"

PETER'S REMINDERS

PETER'S letters, which are reminders, are a striking illustration of exhortation to remembrance and a warning against forgetting. Especially in 2 Pet. 3 do we find him dwelling on this double theme. He says in the opening verse—

"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you: in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

Let us consider some of the things Peter presents to us in this chapter, in particular what he has to say about "pure minds," and its connection with "Remembering" and "Forgetting Not."

PURE MINDS

WHAT does Peter mean when he says the believers have "pure minds"? We can recall reading this verse over the years and, subconsciously as it were, reflecting to our self that Peter does not include US when he writes of stirring up "pure" minds, because we would indeed hesitate to claim that our minds were "perfect."

You see, we were equating "pure" with "perfect," so that we thought a "pure mind" would be a "perfect mind" spiritually.

But does Peter mean by "pure" that the believers' minds were perfect in the sense of being spiritually mature (with perhaps no more room for improvement)? If so, it would seem that such a mind would always remember the things of God, and therefore there would be no need for "stirring it up to remembrance."

Some further thinking on this verse caused us to believe that the above reasoning was erroneous. It seemed evident that by "pure minds" Peter does not mean "spiritually perfect."

PURE: MEANING SINCERE

ON looking into the meaning of the word translated "pure," we are told that —

"The word rendered 'pure' occurs only here and Phil. 1:10 where it is rendered 'sincere'."

So, we may substitute "sincere" for "pure," and get "sincere minds." This is instantly satisfactory to us, for while we hesitate to say we have "pure minds," we do not hesitate in the least to claim we have "sincere minds."

So when we read 2 Pet. 3:1 with this wording, we are truly ready and willing to include ourselves in the number of believers addressed by Peter as having "sincere minds," and we recognize and admit the need for such a mind to be stirred up by way of remembrance.

But let us realize that to be sincere, even according to the English dictionary definition of the word, means "freedom from pretence or deceit." The question is then raised —

"Do we have sincere minds free from pretence or deceit?"

Certainly, if we say we are sincere, we therefore are sincere, so there is no necessity to look into the matter!

But is that so? Anyone versed in the Truth should learn to understand that the chief teaching of God's Truth concerning the flesh is: ITS NATURAL TENDENCY IS TO DECEIT.

So, while we would not, and should not, judge anyone else's sincerity, the grave instructive warning of Scripture is that we should, and can, and MUST examine and judge our own sincerity (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).

If our mind's sincerity has been deceived, then our tendency is to "forget" God's commandments and His Word in the sense of not remembering them in the right way and the proper spirit.

PURE: MEANING UNOBSCURED

As we look a little deeper into the meaning of the word translated "pure" or "sincere," we are further told—

"The word properly refers to 'that which may be judged of in the sunshine' then it means 'clear, manifest' then 'sincere, pure'—as that in which there is no obscurity."

Giving some thought to the last part of this meaning—about obscurity—we can see why the translators could reasonably translate the Greek word into the English word "pure": not meaning pure in the sense of being perfect, but pure in the sense of sincerity that has no obscurity.

This is an intelligible rendering, which also serves to tell us that sincerity is pure or perfect as long as it remains unobscured.

As we have seen from the English definition of the word "sincere," an obscurity arising in one's sincerity would be "pretence" or "deceit." The grave warning to each of us is: that our sincerity may be contaminated through the lusts of our flesh, resulting in pretence or deceit developing in us without our being aware of it, because that which is deceitful is supposed to go undetected in having its own way and accomplishing its work and purpose.

This can affect our mind and memory as to what we want to remember and what we want to forget. (We will have an illustration of this when we consider the "scoffers" in vs. 4-5).

WE MUST BE SINCERE BELIEVERS OF GOD'S WORD

NOW what is it to which the believers' sincere minds were being stirred up by way of remembrance? Peter himself supplies the obvious answer—

"That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (v. 2).

In a truly "pure" or "sincere" mind there is nothing that will obscure or hinder or reject what is written in the Scriptures—Old or New Testament—yet that is what the fleshly-carnal-natural mind is every moment trying to do!

Still, if the believer's mind is kept truly sincere, it will be ever ready to receive and shine forth with what the Scriptures declare to be Truth. Though a sincere-pure mind needs stirring up by way of remembrance, it is inclined to accept and desire to remember instruction from God's Word and forget it not, holding true to God's Word in a manner pleasing in God's sight.

PURE: MEANING TESTED BY LIGHT

STILL further concerning this word translated "pure" and "sincere," we are told that the Greek word means—

"Tested by the sun: flawless: something through which the sun's rays pass."

And this is in keeping with what Peter had already written to the pure-minded believers—

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the Day Star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19).

This Day Star is Christ, who is the Sun of Righteousness and the Word made flesh—even that Word the entrance of which into our being gives light (Ps. 119:130).

Peter is speaking to us of sincere-pure minds receiving the Word of God and the things of Christ UNOBSTRUCTED—as the light of the sun's rays would pass unobstructed through something that is pure and clear. This is only possible if we remain truly sincere-minded, not deceived by the natural mind and the lusts of the flesh, WHOSE VERY STRONGHOLD IS DECEPTION.

Now, while many people in the world are sincere in what they believe, Peter is not talking about sincerity in general (though the deception-test is always valid concerning anyone's sincerity about anything).

He is talking about sincerity in reference to those who know and believe and profess to obey God's Word of Truth. It is the Truth-believer's sincere mind that Peter is stirring up, and not just **any** sincere mind.

Such a sincere-pure mind was without obscurity or flawless when it came to understand, believe, and accept by loving obedience God's Truth in Christ, permitting the enlightening influences of Christ and God's Word to pass through freely.

Working out one's salvation requires that the unobscured and flawless sincerity of the believer's mind be found to be just that when Christ reappears on earth in the judgment day.

DANGER OF SINCERE MIND BECOMING OBSCURED

If the mind remains truly sincere in accepting the enlightening Word, which is progressively enlightening and revealing, then we will have no trouble to remember the things of God and His Word, and we will have no fears of forgetting.

But this is not accomplished automatically or naturally or easily. The Truth teaches us that there will be the trial and testing of our faith and sincerity, consisting of suffering and taking up our cross daily to walk in Jesus' steps.

It is then that the mind can play "tricks" with us. That is, we must then beware that no flaw or impurity or obstruction unknowingly invades the sincerity of our minds and convictions. There is always this danger, that such an impurity will contaminate our sincerity **unawares**.

It will not be done in any other way. It is devious, deceptive thinking that the flesh uses to get its own way, as it is written in Eph. 4:22—

"Put off concerning the former conversation (habits and conduct) the Old Man (of the flesh), which is corrupt according to the **deceitful lusts**."

We repeat that this is the chief lesson we must learn about sinful flesh—that it works through **deception**, setting forth a lie in the attractive guise of truth, causing us to believe that a lie IS truth. To do this, the thinking of the flesh must cause us to assume our minds are sincere when actually not.

The test is the Word of God. The test is Jesus Christ and him crucified. This should teach us we cannot be lenient to the flesh in the slightest degree.

So we must be extremely careful in testing our own sincerity of mind by the Light of God's Word which has been caused to be written for our instruction and learning; for if we are not extremely careful we may gradually be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13) and finally delivered into "believing a lie" (2 Thess. 2:1142).

LUST CREATES FLAWS IN SINCERITY

PETER, in v. 2, continues his theme of remembrance—

"That ye be mindful of the words spoken before . . ."

And then he says (v. 3)—

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts."

"Knowing this first" is in effect to say, "Learn this basic thing, and do not forget it." That which is to be learned first, or which is foremost of things to be learned, is a basic or foundation truth that will not change.

Peter is saying to the sincere-minded first century believers (and to us) that it is a basic prophecy which declares in the last days scoffers—or mockers—will appear and say—

"Where is the promise of his coming? —for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

The believer is being told that when this comes to pass, he should not be shaken in his sincere-minded faith in God's Word, because he has been forewarned by the prophets and apostles. As Jude puts it—

"But, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts."

Having been so forewarned, the believer should remember this prophecy, and forget it not. Rather than his faith being obscured by the appearance of these scoffers, he should be strengthened in his conviction of the prophetic truth of God's Word which foretold them.

Let us not fail to recognize the characteristic of the scoffers. Peter states simply that it is "lusts"; and Jude says: "ungodly lusts." And what caused the belief and faith of Israel to be short-lived after escaping Egypt (Ps. 106:14)?

"They LUSTED exceedingly in the wilderness, and **tempted God** in the desert."

These are the "deceitful lusts" that can be flaws or impurities in our sincere minds, resulting in sin; and which, if not searched out and overcome, can cause us to be hardened through its deceitfulness until we accept a lie as truth!

BIBLE IS FROM GOD, NOT MAN

Going back to the phrase Peter used—"Knowing this first"—we find he prefaced another important announcement with the same phrase in 2 Peter 1:20-21—

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Again, we see that by using this phrase, Peter is saying—

"Here is something basic. Learn this first and foremost, so you will always remember it and never forget it."

And that Word itself will endure always, which is another fundamental truth Peter was reminding the believers of, as he wrote in his first letter—

"The Word of God abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23).

So, believers of any age are not to be shaken in their faith in it, not even by mockers of God's Word and Promises which WILL come to pass, accomplishing its purpose.

WILFUL FORGETTING

In answer to the scoffer's question posed in 2 Pet.3:4, the apostle explains to us in vs. 5-6—

"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished."

The scoffers had said—

"All things continue as they were from the beginning of Creation."

—thereby denying that God did or could interfere in the history of man on earth. But Peter charges them with being "willingly ignorant," which is to say, according to another rendering: "This they willingly forget."

Here is a "forgetting" we do not usually associate with the word "forget," for by it we usually understand a natural forgetting or a temporary failure of memory.

What Peter is saying is that these mockers were **deliberately** "forgetting" the judgment of God on the antediluvian world. This was a conscious effort by the mockers to put something out of their mind—and in doing so they gave expression to a lie, because all things have NOT continued as they were from the beginning of Creation.

And yet it seems these mockers would consider themselves sincere in what they were stating. But we should be able to see how lusts entering into their minds had affected their thinking, causing them to see things only the way they wanted to see them. Absorbed in their lusts, they remembered only what they wanted to remember, and forgot wilfully what they did not want to remember.

We so often see this displayed in the fleshly mind in little things day by day—the mind shutting out things it does not want brought to its attention.

GOD CANNOT FORGET

IT was by the Word of God (which mockers deliberately forget) that all things—heaven and earth—were created and are sustained. And the sustaining period is in accordance with the predetermined purpose of God, the set timetable of His plan of salvation.

God has not forgotten His promises. He remembers them and will fulfil them, in due order and in due time. To comprehend this, we must think as God thinks, judging the time-scale of His plan according to the way He has arranged it. Therefore, we find Peter pointing out in v. 8—

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as 1000 years, and 1000 years as one day."

When Peter says, "Be not ignorant," he is really saying, as the RV puts it, "Forget not." Peter is not teaching something new but reminding the believers not to forget something pertinent to the subject under consideration which is taught in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Peter is reminding them of what is written, and telling them they should not forget it—

"For 1000 years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is passed, and as a watch in the night" (Ps. 90:4).

We should not forget this when we may be inclined to think about the Lord's "long absence" from the earth. Then we understand and realize that it really is not a long time in the Divine Scheme of things.

GOD'S LONGSUFFERING

Not only so, but we will come to know that what some men call "slackness" is in reality the longsuffering of God planned into His redemption time-scale:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us" (2 Peter 3:9).

So let us count the years as God counts them: a 1000 years as one day, and one day as 1000 years—remembering that these periods are given to sinful, perishing men by the longsuffering of God as an opportunity for repentance (v. 9) and salvation (v. 15).

And so once again the carnal mind, which mockingly said God is slack in fulfilling His promises, is found expressing a lie, a lie which gives the wrong evaluation to the gracious intentions of God manifesting His longsuffering to sinful men.

Rather than look at the good side of things, recognizing that apparent delay in the fulfilment of God's promises is precious opportunity for repentance and salvation, the thinking of the flesh brands it as slackness.

CHRIST WILL COME

YES, the Lord will come, but his coming will be as a thief in the night (v. 10). At the set, predetermined time, the day of the Lord will come, and Christ will appear on the earth. It is all according to a carefully-made and well-kept plan.

The Mosaic heaven and earth passed away about 70 A.D, soon after Peter wrote this epistle. And still, after 1900 years, the "New Heaven and New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (v. 13) has not appeared.

But that length of time is not even two days! Before this second day is gone Christ will surely have stolen upon the earth and have arisen as the leading Orb of the New Heavens, the Sun of Righteousness. And all the sincere-minded believers of all ages, when summoned to Christ at that

time (when the Gentile order of things will pass away), will shine as Stars in New Heavens (Dan. 12; Matt. 13).

WHAT MANNER OF PEOPLE WE OUGHT TO BE

IF we want to be found of Christ in this position of favour, we must constantly remember "what manner of people we ought to be in all holy conduct and godliness," and we must look forward with eager expectation to the Day of the Lord, and His Coming, and the New Heavens and Earth (vs. 11-13).

All of these words by Peter have, as it were, the blending tones of "Remember" and "Forget Not," as also in v. 14—

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."

This description of the beloved—diligent and hard at work conforming themselves to God's characteristics—is in contrast to what is said of the mockers in v. 3 who are "walking after their own lusts."

These are the lusts of the flesh manifest in and constituting the present world order of things on the earth, and it is this present natural world-order of things that is to completely pass away at Christ's coming.

We must be unspotted by the world (Jam. 1:27) at that dreadful and glorious time of world-judgment and world-change, if we are to stand approved before the Son of Man and be granted a place of refuge from the destructive form of judgment.

Not so with those who are mockers—who mock at God's promises which embrace both salvation and condemnation: salvation to the beloved who believe, and condemnation to the disobedient who disbelieve.

HASTING THE DAY OF CHRIST

ANOTHER contrast between believer and mocker is contained in v. 12, where we are exhorted (reminded) to be—

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."

Whereas the mocker does not believe Christ will return, the believer should be "hasting the day" or "hasting the coming." The RV renders "hasting unto" as "earnestly desiring."

Viewed in another aspect, we may say that to "haste" in this verse truly means to "urge," and the urging is applied to ourselves, so the sense would be that we are to urge ourselves onward to the Day of God.

Meanwhile, as the Day of God draws closer (today are we nearer to it than when we first believed), we must steadfastly believe in God's Word, not allowing any lust to thrive and take root, growing flaws of obscurity in our sincere-minded acceptance of His Word.

There is always this danger coming from within and without, as long as we are in this present fleshly state, and Peter is giving us gentle but firm and necessary warning against this peril to our eternal salvation.

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES

AT the close of his 2nd letter Peter warns us against those who "wrest" the Scriptures (v. 16). We understand that this word "wrest" may also be translated "pervert." To wrest the Scriptures is to pervert them, meaning—

"To lead or turn from the right way, or from the truth; to give the wrong meaning to; to use in a wrong way."

As this definition shows, such a perversion of Scripture is tantamount to **not remembering** what is written therein, to **forgetting** what God has said. It is quite revealing to look into this word's derivation. We are told—

"Wrest means pervert. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a word meaning a windlass, winch, instrument of torture; and means to roll or

wind on a windlass; then to wrench or turn away, as by the force of a windlass; then to wrest or pervert. It implies a, turning out of the way by the application of force."

How horrifyingly true this is of a perversion of the Scriptures! And what can we say of wresters of the Scriptures who put forth ugly attempts to force into the Word of God something that is not there?

We see that this derivation implies something far stronger than even the dictionary definition of "pervert," for to "wrest the Scriptures" really means to TORTURE GOD'S WORD.

Let us learn to appreciate fully with heart, soul, mind and strength that "Every word of God is pure," and that "God's Word is Truth," and that God's Truth is in Christ, and that "No lie is of the Truth."

Only when we embrace this with all our heart can we say that we faithfully remember God and His Word with no desire or fear or forgetting it by omission or commission.

FINAL ADMONITION AND EXHORTATION BY PETER

THE warning is to all of us, given by Peter in v. 17—

"Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

Having been forewarned of the danger, we should take this warning to heart, and beware of being led away with the majority, earnestly praying to be kept by God's mercy in the way of Truth.

And how is this done? How do we get to that state of mind where we reverence the Word of God with enduring Faith, lively Hope, and true Love?

The answer is: by doing the opposite of what caused the others to wrest the Scriptures.

And what was it they did (or, more correctly, failed to do)? Peter tells us in v. 16—

"In which (Paul's epistles) are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

These wresters of the Scriptures are UNSTABLE (not grounded or rooted in Christ and the Truth) because they are UNLEARNED in their understanding of the Word of God.

The lesson is: **We must apply ourselves to the Word**—seek Divine knowledge as hid treasure—compare Scripture with Scripture—prove all things out of the Word AND hold fast that which is good. Only in this way can we be LEARNED (remember) and be STABLE (forget not).

Therefore, we find Peter closing his second epistle with his last exhortation to the beloved of the first century, and to all the beloved of God up to Christ's thief-like Advent—

"But GROW in grace, and in the KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen." —N.M. January 1969 Berean
