

Reminders

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

John 21:18-19

As the apostle John penned this account, he was revealing the importance that reminders can play in influencing our attitudes, actions, and accomplishments. First, it is evident that John recounted this after the death of the apostle Peter; otherwise, he would not necessarily have known precisely to what Jesus was referring by this statement in verse eighteen. He could have at least connected this prophetic word to Jesus' three-fold exchange with Peter just before this, concerning his relationship with the Lord and its permanent influence on the ministry that Peter would accomplish, leading to some loss of freedom later in life. But John would not be fully aware of those accomplishments in Peter's life until later, when he could look back and make both connections with Peter's ministry of love for Jesus and those He came to save, and with Peter's manner of death as a result of that ministry. Thus, at this later time, John had been reminded of Jesus' words, as he recounts and reflects the impact of both statements.

The second reminder in this text is composed of the simple words to Peter, "Follow me." Peter had heard those words from Jesus previously, evidently multiple times, and had endeavored in those times to obey. His commitment to do so was evident earlier in Jesus' ministry, when he questioned the Lord, as they watched the rich ruler walk away with dismay, regarding the reward for the disciples' decision to leave all and follow. Yet, in this scene where he has yet again been found by the Lord back with his fishing nets, even after at least two previous visits from the risen Christ, those words again come echoing that familiar call. The later accounts of Luke reveal Peter's response, enhanced by the power of the Holy Spirit, to this final call. This call was Peter's reminder, though he had failed in his denial of the Lord, that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and that He who began a good work would continue to perform it. In addition, we may also see Peter's own remembrance of the enigmatic words concerning his death, as perhaps he alludes in his second epistle (II Peter 1.14). Was this Peter's prison epistle?

Although these apostles were specially inspired by the Holy Spirit as they recorded and reflected on these reminders, we can learn the lesson from them to allow our reminders from the word of the Lord to be the encouragement we need to remember and follow His call. As Peter also states in that second epistle his desire to stir his readers to remembrance and to be established in the present truth and blessed hope (II Peter 1.11-13), let us be thankful and encouraged in these reminders.