

Fact Sheet for **“Peter’s Last Words”** **2 Peter 1:12-21**

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Peter has been writing about godly character in this letter (1:5-7). He now continues in this same track.

ESV ¹² ¶ Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

He is writing to Christians.

¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

What was Peter referring to here? After Christ’s resurrection but before His ascension He asked Peter three times, “Simon son of John, do you love Me?” Then Jesus spoke of how Peter would die (John 21:18-19). Here is a traditional account...

“Peter’s final days in Rome are not described in the Scriptures, but various traditional accounts have survived. Reportedly he spent horrific months in the infamous Mamertine Prison, a place where incarceration was often itself a death sentence. Though manacled and mistreated, Peter survived the tortures and apparently communicated the gospel effectively to his guards. Eventually he was hauled out of the dungeon, taken to Nero’s Circus, and there crucified upside down because Peter did not consider himself worthy to be crucified with his head upward, like Christ.”¹

¹⁵ And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

As Peter knows he is coming close to his death he communicates about what is uppermost in his mind. “These things” is a reference to the virtues he mentioned earlier (verses 5-7) and his urging them to become partakers of the divine nature (verse 4). Consider other individuals in God’s Word who spoke as they came close to death. Moses last sermon was the book of Deuteronomy. Joshua spoke to Israel toward the end of his life (Joshua 24:15). In Samuel’s farewell address he urged the people of Israel to stay true to God (1 Samuel 12:24). Jesus knew he was going to stand trial before the Sanhedrin that night and be crucified the next day. His last discourse to His disciples is found in John 14-16. All of these individuals, coming close to their own exodus, communicated what was uppermost in their minds. Here we have Peter’s thoughts. He is urging them to supplement their faith with character qualities consistent with God’s nature. Then Peter adds these words...

¹⁶ ¶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jesus’ first coming), but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷

¹ Foxe: Voices of the Martyrs, p. 23.

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

What Peter is referring to is the events on the Mount of Transfiguration as Jesus was on His final journey to Jerusalem (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36). Can you imagine the impact this would have on your faith if you had been there? Then Peter goes to another thought.

¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The "prophetic word" is the written word given by the prophets.

Peter wrote of **illumination** in verse 19 (lamp shining, day dawns, morning star rises). The morning star brought the morning light and refers to one of the brighter planets, usually Venus. In other words God let's us see how we ought to live see Ecclesiastes 2:14; 1 John 1:7).

Peter wrote of **revelation** in verse 20. True prophecy requires God revealing information. Prophecy does not originate in the prophet. Consider Elisha and the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:27). Elisha knew that God had not revealed this information to him.

Peter wrote of **inspiration** in verse 21 ("carried along by the Holy Spirit"). Paul put it differently in 2 Timothy 3:16.

Now we come to a critical question. *Why* did Peter move from writing about godly character qualities to the Mount of Transfiguration and to the prophecies of Scripture? Peter is saying that his call to become partakers of the divine nature by pursuing godly character qualities has, not just his authority as an apostle, but the authority of God the Son (Peter walked with Him and listened to Him), God the Father (Peter heard the Father's voice on the Mount of Transfiguration affirming Jesus), and God the Spirit (who was behind the words of the scripture).

If you are satisfied having character qualities that you know are incongruent with God's own character then Peter's words are true of you (1:9).

Christians have the call and the choice to respond well because we have been forgiven from our sins in Christ, have the scripture, and have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Here's a final question. Are you satisfied with your present character or are you a work in progress? Peter would say, "Pursue godliness."