

OUR PRECIOUS FAITH

2 Peter 1:1-2

Intro: Today I am beginning the exposition of the Apostle Peter's second epistle. As you all know, or you can see, it is shorter than the first epistle. I don't know how many of you read and re-read the first epistle as we were going through it. One of our men told that he read it every week, one chapter each day, Monday through Friday. I hope more of you did the same. Now with an epistle of only three chapters, we all can read it at least once a week, and possibly more often than that. Again, as I usually do, I timed myself in reading it aloud, and I trust it was thoughtfully and prayerfully, and it took me just under twelve minutes to read through the whole epistle. So I would like to encourage all of you to be reading it. It is not so long but what it could be read by your family after a meal during the week. I feel that we as parents and grandparents have a responsibility to train our children in the reading of the Word of God. A good place to start, or to continue if you have already started, is when we are going through a short epistle like 2 Peter.

Now I do not want to interfere with your regular reading of the Bible, but perhaps this could be added to what you are already doing. It is my prayer that all of you will be faithfully reading the Word day after day, from Genesis to Revelation, at least once every year. But all of us can do more than we are doing, and so I encourage you to add 2 Peter to your reading while we are considering it together each Sunday morning.

Let me begin by raising and asking the question,

I. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE APOSTLE PETER WROTE THIS EPISTLE?

First, because we find his name at the beginning of the epistle. He added "Simon" to Peter, and he called himself "a servant . . . of Jesus Christ," as well as "an apostle," but the writer is the same as the writer of the first epistle.

Furthermore, we have his reference to being the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord, and you will find this in verses 16 through 18 of chapter 1.

And then it is significant that he mentioned the Apostle Paul. He called him, "our beloved brother Paul." See 3:15. We know that these two men were the chief apostles to the Jews and to the Gentiles; Peter, to the Jews,

and Paul to the Gentiles. It is very likely that the Apostle Paul was with the Lord at this time, and according to chapter 1 in this epistle, verse 4, it would only be “shortly” until Peter was with Paul in the presence of the Lord in heaven.

So there is that much at least in this epistle which would identify Peter as he referred to himself in chapter 1, verse 1. Possibly there are some of you who do not know that it was customary in those days, if you were writing a letter, to put your name first at the beginning of the letter, and also the name or names of those to whom you were writing. And this is what we have at the beginning of chapter 1.

But this brings us to a second question:

II. TO WHOM WAS THE APOSTLE PETER WRITING?

We don't have any names given in chapter 1 and verse 1 like we did at the beginning of his first epistle. There you will remember we had five places mentioned: “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” But nothing like that here in 2 Peter.

But I would call your attention to what Peter said at the beginning of chapter 3. (Read 3:1.) So this makes it clear that this second epistle was written to the believers in those five places mentioned at the beginning of 1 Peter. This was what we could call, *a follow-up letter*. And this is how we know that both epistles were written originally to the same believers, probably most of them Jewish, and believers who had been driven from their homes, probably in Jerusalem, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me add this to what I have just said. Because it is a part of God's Word, we can say that it was also written *for us, and for all believers since Peter wrote the epistle, and for all who will believe until the end of time*. So we can read and re-read this epistle as we would if Peter had said, “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the saints of the Trinity Bible Church in Portland, Oregon.” This epistle is for us, and we need it today at the end of the twentieth century just as much as those Jewish believers did in the first century. We speak a different language, but spiritually we have the same needs, and we face the same dangers, and we need the same answers. So this epistle is of great doctrinal and practical importance to us.

Now a third question:

III. WHY DID HE WRITE THIS EPISTLE TO THEM?

The way we answer this question about any book of the Bible, is by reading and re-reading the book

I think that as you read and re-read this epistle, you will agree with those who say that in the last two verses of the epistle, chapter 3, verses 17 and 18, we have Peter's two reasons for writing this epistle. (Read.)

But he mentioned his purposes in the reverse order from what we have them in the epistle itself. (By the way, I hope that all of you understand that an epistle is a letter. I don't know if it is true or not, but I heard of someone who thought that an epistle was the wife of an apostle. No, an epistle is a letter.)

I mentioned that Peter mentioned his purposes in the reverse order from what we have in this letter itself. In the first chapter he was emphasizing very strongly the need every believer has to make progress in our lives as Christians. It is an extremely important chapter. Its importance is indicated by the fact that Peter would write such an epistle as this when he knew that it was the last time he would be able to write to those believers we have been concerned with since the beginning of 1 Peter.

Chapter 2 gives the warning, and from the illustrations he draws from the OT, it is apparent that the people of God have always had false teachers and false teaching to contend with.

And then in chapter 3 we can see that one of the main points of controversy had to do with the coming of the Lord. This doctrine was very precious to the early Christians. They lived in the expectation that the Lord was coming back right away. As time went on, and the Lord did not return, those who were enemies of truth taunted believers with their words which amounted to saying, "If the Lord hasn't returned by this time, He is not going to return at all." So Peter addressed that accusation in chapter 3.

But the fact remains that our greatest safeguard against whatever the false teachers might say, is (1) an increasing knowledge of God and Christ, and the truth which they have given us in the Bible, and (2) a continual growing in our likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we need to grow every day *in our knowledge of the truth, and in the daily application*

of the truth to our lives. There is nothing that any of us needs to be more concerned about than these two points. I hope that our time in this epistle will, under the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit, write these two points upon our hearts in a way that we will never forget them. Always read your Bible asking the Lord to teach you what you need to learn, and then to show you how the truth you are learning should affect your life.

Now we are ready to look at verses 1 and 2 or chapter 1. And the first point is:

IV. THE WRITER (2 Peter 1:1a).

You can all see how the Apostle Peter identified himself: “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.”

This was a little more detailed than the way he introduced himself in 1 Peter. There he simply said, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Why the difference?

Well, I doubt if anyone can say for sure, but let me make some suggestions. We know, as I have pointed out, that Peter knew that he would not live much longer. And so he must have been inclined to look back upon his past life, as well as looking ahead to being reunited with the Lord Jesus. “Simon,” or *Simeon*, as he was also called, was the name given to him by his parents. It was the name of one of the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Simeon, but I doubt if that was in Peter’s mind when he wrote this. Instead, I am inclined to think that Peter may have hearkened back to the time when the Lord used this name. Peter had failed the Lord so miserably, denying that he even knew the Lord. After our Lord’s resurrection you will remember how the Lord had appeared to His disciples twice, and the third time He appeared to them, they were fishing, had fished all night, and had caught nothing. The Lord called to them from the shore, and when they told Him that they had spent the night and caught nothing, the Apostle John recognized that it was the Lord who had told them to cast their net on the right side of the ship. When they did what He said, their net was suddenly full with 153 good sized fish. After John had said, “It is the Lord,” Peter put his coat on, jumped into the water, and made his way to the Lord. The Lord had prepared breakfast for them, and afterwards, evidently when Peter and the Lord were by themselves, the Lord asked Peter three times if he loved Him. But the significant thing about the way Peter identified himself in this epistle, “Simon Peter,” was that the Lord spoke to Peter, calling him by the name that his parents had given him.

Three times the Lord said, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”

“Peter” was the name that the Lord had given to him. And He gave it to Peter after Peter had made that great confession in response to the Lord’s question as to what the disciples believed about the Lord. Peter had said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The Lord blessed him, and said that Peter had not learned this on his own, but that the Father had revealed that to him. And then the Lord said, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter.”

So the name Simon represented what Peter was by nature, and Peter represented what he became by grace. But the fact that the Lord called him “Simon” again after his denial, meant that Peter still had his old nature, and in his fall he represented the very truth that Peter was concerned about as he wrote this second epistle. And perhaps he was more conscious in the moment that he penned his name, that he was just a sinner saved by grace, and that it was only God’s grace that could change “Simon” into a rock, “Peter” (which is the meaning of that name).

The older we get, the more we realize how sinful we have been, but we also need to remember what God in His grace has done to change us.

Some day the change will be complete, but until then we all have an old name, but we also have a new name. *This is why I believe that Peter called himself in this epistle, “Simon Peter.”*

But he also added the word “servant” to the word “apostle,” putting “servant” first. In other words, he was a “servant” first, and then an “apostle.” Both are titles of honor when to them can be added the words, “of Jesus Christ.” But there may be memories attached to these titles as well because we remember how the Lord had washed His disciples’ feet, and then told them to do for each other what He had done for all of them. “Servant” is a translation of the Greek word δοῦλος, meaning *a bondservant*. *It shows how in Peter’s last days that he was rejoicing that he had the special honor of being the Lord’s servant, devoted to do the Lord’s will, and having forsaken all rights to himself.*

None of us can claim to be an apostle, but we all can claim to be servants, bondservants, of our Lord Jesus Christ. And let it be a name that means something, not just a title we take upon ourselves. Let us speak of our submission to the Lord, and our desire to do His will.

But now let us notice

V. HOW PETER IDENTIFIED THOSE TO WHOM HE WAS WRITING (2 Peter 1:1b).

I am referring to those words in the latter part of verse 1: “To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Some Greek scholars feel that the latter part of this statement should read, *through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ* – indicating that Peter firmly believed in the Deity of our Lord, which we know that he did.

Notice the word “obtained.” I think most of us in the past have been inclined to think that faith comes from us, and that this is what we add to what Christ did on the Cross to bring about our salvation. But that is because we did not understand what the Scriptures teach about faith. “Obtained” means *what we have obtained by divine allotment*. Faith is a gift to us from God. Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Faith comes to us through the Word of God. So faith is not our contribution to our salvation. We have no contribution to make. Faith is God’s gift to us by which we receive salvation. I hope that is clear to all of us. At the time that God appointed us for salvation in eternity past, He also determined at that time that He would give us the faith to receive salvation as His gift to us.

But now notice how Peter spoke of our faith. He called it “like precious faith.” It is precious because it is priceless. It cannot be purchased with money. It cannot be earned by good works, or what we call good works. And it is precious because if God had not given it to us, it would have been impossible for us to be saved. It is ours because of God’s grace and because of His great love for us. John Newton was speaking of the preciousness of our faith when he penned that second verse of his great hymn, Amazing Grace. It goes like this:

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

This precious faith by which we have received the gift of salvation was, according to the Apostle Peter speaking by the Spirit of God, “through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

This phrase takes us right to the Cross. Our faith is precious also and preeminently, because it was through the death of “our God and Savior

Jesus Christ, that our sins were put away. The full price of our salvation was paid by our Lord Jesus Christ when He shed His precious blood upon the Cross, so that our salvation was secured for us before we ever believed. Our faith did not secure our salvation; the death of our Lord Jesus Christ secured it, and then He granted us faith that we might receive it. Salvation is of the Lord, from start to finish, and it is in Christ that we can be sure that we right now have eternal life. No wonder that Peter called it a “precious faith.”

But what did he mean by “like precious faith.” He meant that the lowliest saint on the face of the earth, has exactly the same faith, and the same salvation, and the same Savior, as this great Apostle. We all are saved the same way. It took the same grace of God to save the Apostle Peter that it takes to save you and me. It is “like precious faith with us.” There is not one way of salvation for an apostle, and another for you and me. There is not one way of salvation for Jews, and another way for Gentiles. Christ is the only Savior, and it was on the Cross that our faith was purchased and our salvation secured.

Finally, we have

VI. THE APOSTLE’S GREETING (2 Pet. 1:2).

This, too, is an enlarged form of Peter’s greeting in the first epistle. There it was, “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” Here it is, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.”

We are saved by grace. We deserve just the opposite of salvation. We deserve eternal judgment because of our sins. But in grace God has saved us even though we don’t deserve it, and never could deserve it. *But we live by grace. Every day we need the blessing of the Lord. Every day we need the strength which God in His grace gives us – grace to overcome temptation, and grace to live to please God.*

And with this grace comes “peace.” We have no peace apart from the grace of God. But how do these come to us regularly, day by day, throughout our lives? They come, they are multiplied to us, “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” And the better we know God, and the better we know Jesus our Lord, the more grace and peace will be multiplied to us. This is why Peter placed such an emphasis in this epistle upon knowing the Lord.

He used a very interesting word for “knowledge.” It is the Greek word, ἐπίγνωσις. The regular Greek word for knowledge is γνῶσις. Even in this simple form it speaks of “*knowledge of an especial kind and relatively high character*” (Greek-English Lexicon, p. 36) but when you put the preposition ἐπί in front of it, then it speaks of a fuller knowledge, and ultimately leads to a complete knowledge.

Paul used these words in 1 Cor. 13:12, and we can see the difference between them. Let me read it to you in the NASB:

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Cor. 13:12).

We cannot fully know God in this life. Nor can we fully know “Jesus our Lord.” But we can know Them better than we do now. We need to know Them as They have revealed Themselves in the Word. We can never fully attain to that knowledge, but that is to be our objective, always, constantly, “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).

And so the more you and I need God’s grace in daily living, and God’s peace to calm and comfort our hearts, the more we need to devote ourselves to becoming better acquainted with God, our heavenly Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Concl: What an introduction to this wonderful epistle! I hope your appetite to learn more has been increased as we have looked at these verses. But before we go on we need to act upon what we have learned here. How wonderful it is to see a man like Peter, who had walked with the Lord for many years, now approaching the time when he will be reunited with his Lord, never to be separated again, and to see that he is walking humbly with his God, desiring to know Him even better, and wanting to make his remaining days count for the glory of his Lord. We can do no better than to walk in our Peter’s footsteps. May God enable us to do exactly that!

Closing verses: Phil. 3:7-9:

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

“PRECIOUS PROMISES”

2 Peter 1:3-4

Intro: I won't ask for a show of hands, but I wonder how many of you have been reading 2 Peter this past week – at least once during the week. I managed to read it once each day even though we were at Camp this past week, and I have alternated in my reading between the KJV, the NKJ, and the NASB. I have yet to read it in the NIV, but that will probably be done this week. I intend, the Lord willing, and with His blessing, to read it each day during the weeks that we will be considering it on Sunday mornings. And I hope that all of you will join me. Remember that it only takes twelve minutes to read it slowly and aloud, and I'm sure that all of us let that much time get away from us each day which we could redeem for this very useful purpose.

Last week we learned that the Apostle Peter was the writer of this epistle, and that he wrote it to the same people to whom he had sent his first letter. 2 Peter 3:1 makes this latter point clear.

Also we saw that Peter had two main reasons for writing to them. This is apparent in the epistle itself, but it is emphasized in the last two verses of 2 Peter. (Read 2 Peter 3:17-18.) The two reasons were:

- 1) To warn them about false teachers – and he had devoted chapter 2 to this subject, and even a part of chapter 3.
- 2) To encourage them to continue growing in the Lord. And this was his emphasis in chapter 1.

So he reverses the order in those last two verses, probably because he wanted to emphasize their need for spiritual growth. The best way to keep from falling for false teaching, is to have our hearts firmly established in the truth of the Word of God and its bearing upon our lives.

So this is a very important letter for us today. We all have the need to grow in the Lord, and we will have that need as long as we live. But we also, as has been the case with believers in every generation, have an abundance of false teachers who may use the Bible, but are intent on getting us to believe doctrines which are not taught in the Bible. And so we need to pay special attention to what the Apostle Peter wrote in this epistle.

We saw in verse 1 where Peter identified himself, that the way he did it was slightly different, and a little longer, from his first epistle. (Explain.)

We also saw that he addressed those to whom he was writing as those had received by divine allotment the gift of faith, a “precious faith,” by which they had been saved. And he called it a “like precious faith” because the faith that they had received from God was identically the same as the faith which he, the Apostle Peter, had received from God. And so he was saying that they all had been saved by the same kind of faith. They had not earned it, nor did they deserve it. They could not buy it. It can only be obtained by faith, and that is what makes God’s gift to us so “precious.”

And it is important to notice that this salvation from sin was not because God had closed His eyes to our sins, but that He had saved us in righteousness through the death of His dear Son. Christ took our penalty. He paid our debt in full by His own death, and so we are not only forgiven of our sins, but are clothed in the righteousness of God as we heard so clearly explained this past week at Camp.

And then we saw that Peter used the familiar opening prayer and greeting which we have seen so often in Paul’s epistles, a prayer for grace and peace. But in connection with this opening prayer we have an emphasis with which Peter would continue on into his letter – an emphasis on “knowledge.” And the word he used here means *a full knowledge* – not that we can ever know all that there is to be known of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he meant to indicate that our primary need as the people of God is to know God, and to know Christ, and to know them as fully and as intimately as it is possible for us to know Them. Grace and peace both come to us in proportion to the extent of our knowledge of God.

Now I am sure that those early Christians to whom Peter was writing, realized that being saved from our sins, being saved from eternal judgment, was not all that there is to salvation. Being saved means that we are born again, we have eternal life, *and we need to grow!* It is the same with our physical birth. That is only the beginning. We were born, but we needed to be fed, we needed to grow, we needed to learn. And the same is true of us as Christians. We have had to learn certain things in order to be saved. But once we are saved, there is so much more for us to learn, and all that we need to learn is found right here in our Bibles. Our Bibles tell us about God. Our Bibles tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Bibles tell us about the Holy Spirit. Our Bibles tell us how God wants us to live, and what God wants us to be, and where we are going. All of that, and much more, is found right in our Bibles.

But in connection with what we are to be, and how we are to live, notice the first part of verse 3. We have already learned that God has given us the gift of faith by which we have trusted in Christ. Now the Apostle Peter wrote here in verse 3 about:

I. GOD'S DIVINE POWER (2 Peter 1:3).

To say that "His divine power" has given something to us, is the equivalent of saying that God has given us what we have received. We are the recipients of what God in His sovereign, almighty power has given to us. The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," according to Romans 1:16. One reason we can't save ourselves is because we don't have that kind of power. It takes "divine power," the power of God, and that is what is bestowed upon us when we are saved. It is another way of saying that God gives Himself to us in salvation. And it is equally true that Christ gives Himself to us when we are saved. He is our life. And we also know that the Holy Spirit is given to us when we are saved. To be a Christian is an amazing thing!

But what do we find in this divine power?

We find that when God saves us (and this is a part of what we learn when we give ourselves to learning about God) – what we learn is that when God saves us, He gives us "all things that pertain to life and godliness." This means that we have in God, the Three Persons of the Godhead, and in the Word that They have given to us, everything that we will ever need to enable us to live godly lives, lives that please God, and glorify God. We lived one way before we were saved; we have to live an entirely different way after we are saved. And at salvation we are given all of the truth, and all of the power, and even the desire, to live godly lives. We don't understand it all at once, but everything is there.

So when anyone comes along, trying to add what is in your Bible, or telling you something different, don't pay any attention to them. You and I have everything in our Bibles that God wants us to know, and God stands behind His Word to make it powerful and effective in our lives.

I saw an ad in a magazine just yesterday in which some men were claiming to give us all of the details about the Lord's return, including when He is coming back. That is not in the Bible. No date is set. And so when you hear of someone who claims to have the date, write it down in your mind that he doesn't know what he is talking about. And if he is wrong in that,

there are probably a lot of other things that he is mistaken about also.

The Apostle Paul stated it this way in Ephesians 1:3:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: This doesn't mean that we know what they all are right after we are saved. But this fact remains, and it applies equally to all believers. You may enjoy your blessings in Christ more than I do because you have grown more in the Lord than I have, but you don't have any more than I do. Many people who profess to be Christians spend their whole lives trying to get something more than they already have, but you can't have anything more than what you have in God, and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit! You can know more about them, and live more in the light of them, but you and I have in the divine power of God "all things that pertain to life and godliness." There undoubtedly will be more that we will learn when we get to heaven, but for now we are limited to this one book, and we will never be able to exhaust all of the truth that is here.

But notice the word "knowledge" again here in verse 3, and it is the same word that Peter used in verse 2, *a full knowledge*. Lit. we can say that it means *more knowledge on top of the knowledge that I have already learned*. God is so great and so wonderful, and there is so much to learn about His presence with us, His power, His wisdom, His will, His grace and His mercy, His holiness and His love. When you read 2 Peter, or any other book of the Bible, look for what the writer is teaching you about God, or about Jesus Christ, or about the Holy Spirit. They are all the same, but They each have special works that they do, and particular roles that They carry out in our lives, but seek to know God. There is nothing more important that any one of us has to do, and the place to go to learn about God is to your Bible. Let others help you understand God, but always make sure that they do not depart from what is written in Scripture.

Now how did Peter describe God here in verse 3?

He said that God is the One Who has "called us to glory and virtue." This means that our salvation was not our idea. We did not decide on our own that we needed God, or that we needed Christ. God called us! He awakened us out of our spiritual death, and He brought us to Himself through Christ for "glory and virtue."

We are going to be thinking about that word "virtue" when we get to verse 5 next week, but let's get prepared for it right now. But first "glory"! And

this anticipates what we are going to see in just a minute or two when we get to verse 4.

— You will find that there is a textual difference as you read different translations, but the variations do not really change the meaning of the text. For example, some, like the KJ translate what we have here, “called to glory and virtue.” Others say, “called by glory and virtue” (NKJ). And the NAS renders it, “called it by His own glory and excellence.”

Actually they are all correct. We are called to share God’s glory and His virtue. But we are also called *by* His glory and virtue. God was not acting contrary to His own Deity when He called us. Because of the substitutionary work of Christ on the Cross, as Paul said, God could be “just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). So, although there is a great difference between God and us, a holy God and worthless sinners, yet when Christ put away our sin, and we were clothed in God’s righteousness, God was acting in complete harmony with His Deity when He called us to Himself. There is no blemish on the character of God because He has saved you and me. Christ saw to it that the righteousness of God, His glory and His virtue, were satisfied completely.

— But we are also called “to glory and virtue.” That is, we are called to share the very likeness of God and of Christ. This is the ultimate and glorious end of our salvation. We are to live godly lives now, growing to be more and more like the Lord, and, although we will never be Deity, we are predestined to be God-like when we are finally with the Lord. Remember that salvation consists of justification, sanctification, and our final glorification.

All of this is very, very wonderful, isn’t it? It is far beyond anything that we as sinful people would ever have dreamed that God would ever do for us.

But how is all of this to come about? For this we move on to verse 4 where Peter tells us about:

II. GOD’S “EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES” (2 Peter 1:4).

— Now let me ask you a question. All through the Bible we read about God’s commandments and God’s promises. My question is this: How do you respond to a commandment as compared to a promise? What are you

to do with a commandment? We all know that a commandment from God is something that we must obey. On the contrary, we believe a promise, don't we? Or we can contrast a commandment and a promise in this way: a command from God is something for us to do; a promise is something that God pledges Himself to do for us. We don't obey promises; we believe them. A promise depends upon God, and His faithfulness to what He has said that He would do.

Next week when we get to verse 5 we will learn what we are to do, but here in verse 4, since we are talking about God's promises, we are concerned with what God has promised to do.

It is by these "exceedingly great and precious promises" that we are to be made "partakers of the divine nature." God has given us promises that are dependent upon Him. They are "exceedingly great" because of the tremendous work that He will do for us, and they are "precious" because what God is doing by His promises cannot be accomplished in any other way. I can't do what God has purposed in our salvation, and neither can you. So, Peter is telling us here that before we learn about what God wants us to do, we need to learn that our salvation is dependent upon the promises of God. God has pledged Himself to us to do everything that is necessary to make us "partakers of the divine nature," and for that to be manifested inwardly and outwardly in our lives.

Let me give you a sample of some of those "exceedingly great and precious promises."

1) John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

2) John 5:24:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

3) John 10:27-30:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

4) John 14:2-3:

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Have you ever in reading your Bible, just concentrated on the promises of God? If you want an exercise that will strengthen your faith, this is what will do it. And then after dwelling on the promises of God, turn to the first chapter of Titus, and read the first three verses:

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour (Titus 1:1-3).

And then to strengthen your faith even more, turn to Heb. 6, and the last four verses:

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 6:17-20).

How secure we are under the promises of a God Who not only will not lie, but He cannot lie. Lying is a sin, and our God is incapable of sin.

But we have one more statement in our text which I must mention before I close. It is a look backward from where we are as Christians. This is what Peter said: "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

This is also a promise. We have escaped, not by our doing, but by what

God has done for us, in calling us to Himself out of this world. This world is corrupt before God, and manifesting more of its corruption all of the time. And that which causes all of the corruption are the desires, the lusts, that are in the hearts of men – the lust for power, the lust for money, the lust for sexual sin, the lust for things, the lust for revenge. We haven't escaped by our own power, but the Lord has delivered us. We are still "in the world," but we are no longer "of the world." This world is passing away, but it will pass under the judgment of God, a judgment far worse than the worst storm, or the worst plague, or the worst war, or the worst trial that anyone has ever experienced, even worse than all of the tragedies of this life combined.

The Apostle John has told us,

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Concl: Where do you stand today – in the world with all of its corruption, and under the judgment of God, or with God, resting on all of His promises, which has to start with the promise of salvation? Perhaps some of you have been doing what a lot of people have tried to do, and that is to make yourself acceptable to God. If anyone could do that, the Lord Jesus Christ would never have come to earth. But it isn't possible! Salvation is by faith, faith in the atoning work of Christ on the Cross, and not by any good works that we could possibly do. Seek the Lord Jesus Christ today, not by what you do, but because of what He has done. Put your trust in Him. He died to save sinners, and to bring them to God. Come as a guilty sinner, and put your trust in Him. He will not turn you away, nor will He ever cast you out.

And may those of us who know the Lord, pay attention to God's promises. We need to be faithful to the Lord, but our security is not in our faithfulness to Him (because we so often fail), but in God's faithfulness to us. He never will fail us, nor forsake us. So let us trust His promises and rest in His glorious power.

ADDING TO OUR FAITH

Part 1

2 Peter 1:5-11

Intro: Let me encourage you again to be reading 2 Peter as often as you can. I told you that I had timed myself in reading it aloud, and slowly, and that it took a little less than 12 minutes. This past week I did the same, and it took a little over 13 minutes. I may have been using a different translation the second time, but anyway I can say that you will be able to read it easily in a thoughtful way in less than 15 minutes. The more you read it, the better you will understand it, and the better you understand it, the more you will enjoy it. So I hope you will join me in reading it as often as possible, once each day if you can fit it into your schedule.

Today we come to verse 5 in chapter 1.

Up to this point the Apostle Peter has emphasized what God has done for us in salvation. He has given us the faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. And in saving us God has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” This means that becoming a child of God is more than a matter of being saved from the penalty of our sins, as wonderful as that is. Salvation also includes a change in us so that our lives can be changed. That is what Peter meant when he used the words “life and godliness.” This is a life that is pleasing to God, and a life in which we are divinely enable to become like God, a life in which we become progressively “partakers of the divine nature.” We have been delivered from “the corruption that is in this world through lust, that is, through all of the selfish and self-centered desires, the sinful desires, that are in all of our hearts by nature. In salvation God graciously intervenes to change the whole course of our lives by changing us. We have been born again, and consequently we are new creatures.

But what we all need to learn at the beginning of our lives as Christians, is that at salvation God gives us by His Spirit, and in Christ, all that we will ever need to make us God-like in our hearts and in our lives. And we find all of this wonderful truth in our Bibles. So we read our Bibles to find out, not what we need, but what we already have in Christ, and how to live out what God has worked into us by saving us. And that is what was Peter’s concern as he got down to what is verse 5 in chapter 1. In the first four verses we have been learning what God has done *for us*. Then beginning with verse 5 we see that there are certain things for us to do.

I think it was Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who until the early 1980's was the pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London, who said that Christians commonly make two mistakes when it comes to the practical teaching of Scripture. One is that they try to make it a condition of salvation. By that I mean, that they try to make salvation mainly a work of God, but partly a work that we do. The other mistake that is often made is that some Christians treat the commandments of Scripture in a passive way, saying that God will do what needs to be done in our lives, and so they don't feel any responsibility *to do* the will of God.

Both of these are mistakes.

We all need to understand that salvation is a work of God from start to finish. Our works have no part in our salvation. But after we are saved, there are, according to Scripture, things that we are to do. We are responsible for our obedience to the Word of God. But even in that we need to trust the Lord for both the strength and the wisdom to do what He wants us to do.

Two verses where the Apostle Paul made this very clear, are found in his letter to the church at Philippi. Most of you are acquainted with these verses, but let me read them to you. The Apostle Paul told the believers in the Philippian church,

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

We have salvation right now, and, as Peter has taught us, in saving us God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. But we need to work out what God has done in our hearts, and He is the One Who at the same time is working in us to make us willing to do His will, and then to enable us to do it.

These great truths are also clearly presented in Ephesians 2:8-10. You could probably quote those with me, but let me read them to you:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8-10).

God works in the Christian life, and we work. He works in us and through us, and by His grace we seek to be obedient to His will. The Christian life is so different from mere human life, and so much greater, that we could never measure up to what God wants us to do if we had only our own strength to go on. That is why we pray for strength, and pray for help, and pray even for the desire to be obedient to the Lord.

I hope we all understand this because it is so important in our daily lives as the children of God. Without the Lord's help, we can do nothing. But we can do all that He has commanded us to do through Christ who strengthens us.

Now let us turn more specifically to our text, and note how the Apostle Peter approached this subject of practical Christian living. He first indicated that

I. FAITH IS FOUNDATIONAL TO OUR LIVING (2 Peter 1:5a).

Most expositors point out that the translation of the KJV here is not as clear as it could be. Instead of reading, "And beside this," a better translation would be, as you find in the NKJ and the NAS, "But also for this very reason," or "Now for this very reason also." The idea is that faith is the foundation of our salvation, but we do leave faith behind in our lives after we are saved. We live by faith, but our faith needs to be strengthened. We need to learn to put to use what we have in Christ. And through diligence we are from what we have in Christ, to supply our faith with all of those graces which Peter mentioned: virtue, knowledge, temperance (which is self-control), patience (which means perseverance), godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. We don't look for these qualities in ourselves, nor do we look anywhere else for them, but they are to be found in Christ and the salvation we have in Him. But they need to become a part of us, an active part of our faith, and so that is what was Peter's concern.

Godly expositors have tried to illustrate in various ways what Peter was saying, but there really are no good illustrations because there is nothing like what it takes for us to become partakers of the divine nature. We believe the precious promises that God has given us in His Word, and we look to Christ to manifest His life in us, seeking by His grace to be obedient to His will.

Perhaps the closest and best illustration is the way in which good parents work with their children to train them to be what they should be. We want

our children to learn to obey us. We want our children to be humble and kind. We want them to be honest. We want them to learn to work, and to be dependable and diligent. But even this illustration breaks down because parents can't get inside of their children to help them, or to make them, do and be what they want their children to be. We can encourage our children when they do the right things, and we can punish them when they are disobedient. But that is about all we can do. Those of us who are Christians pray for our children, but we are definitely limited in what we can do for our children.

But God is not limited in any way. He has ways of dealing with us when we are disobedient or careless in our living, and He blesses us when we are obedient to Him. But it Christ in us Who is our hope of glory. He tells us what to do, and they we trust Him to make such living possible. *But it is important that we realize how dependent we are upon Him, and that without Him we can never be what He has ordained that we should be.* Nevertheless, we are responsible to seek by faith from the Lord that which will produce these qualities in our lives.

And so let us think for a moment about:

II. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES (1 Peter 1:5m).

These are to be seen in the words, "giving all diligence, add to your faith."

Peter had spoken in the first four verses about what God has given to us. Now we find him speaking about what we are to give to God.

The word that Peter used here for "giving" is an interesting word. It means to bring along side what we have. And this would suggest that we approach our lives bringing as our resources what we have received from God. He has given to us the salvation that we have, and from what we have in that salvation, we give back to Him what He has given to us that He might use it in our lives.

The next word we need to notice is "diligence." It is a word which combines several important ideas. In the first place it means to get busy at this right away, and stay busy. And it means to put forth all of the effort that it takes to accomplish what you are seeking to do. None of this is easy. It takes divine wisdom and divine power to be a partaker of the divine nature. There are lots of obstacles in the way living in a world like we live in, and so we need to be determined in our hearts that nothing shall stand

in the way. It will mean that we must make some real changes in our lives, and those will not be easy. But we can be thankful that what God asks us to do, He enables us to do. And so this is why all of this will teach us what it means to live by faith in God., and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

But now let us begin looking at that which needs to be supplied to our faith. I will call them

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE CHILD OF GOD (1 Peter 1:5b-7).

The first one is:

A. “Virtue” (v. 5b).

We know that a Christian should be virtuous, that he should be morally upright, that he should no longer live in sin, a point which the Apostles make very clear in their writings. But the meaning of many words in our English language have changed since the KJV of the Bible was written. And besides all of the following six points that Peter would make are virtues, and do we would have to take this as a title for the rest, or examine the possibility that the Greek word has a meeting that is different from what we understand when we use the word “virtue.”

One Greek scholar has said that the word that Peter used here meant “the proper fulfillment of anything” (Green, Michael, *2 Peter and Jude, Tyn-dale New Testament Commentaries*, p. 76). In this way it could mean *excellence*. Then Dr. Green said that the proper fulfillment, or excellence, of a knife is to cut. And that the proper fulfillment of a horse is to run.

And Dr. Green went on to ask, What is the proper fulfillment of a Christian? This would be the same as asking, Why did God save us? The answer, of course, is given in verse 4, that we might be “partakers of the divine nature.” This is the same as saying that we are to be like Christ.

Now it is a very simple thing for a person to say, “I am a Christian.” Or it is not unusual for a person to claim that they have “faith.” But what Peter was saying here is that there must be evidence, there must be some outward, practical evidence, that our claim to have faith, and to be a Christian, is a genuine claim. If a person really knows the Lord, the impact of the character of Christ will be seen in the life of that person. And one

outstanding thing about Christ was His commitment to the Father, to do His will, to glorify the Father's Name. A real believer who is growing in his faith, who is walking with the Lord, will show by his life that his faith is living and powerful, and that he is devoted to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter used this word in his first epistle and it is in a verse which is often quoted by those of us who know the Lord. Please turn back to 1 Peter, and look with me at chapter 2, and verse 9. (Read.)

The Greek word that I have been talking about, and which Peter used in these verses is ἀρετή. And this is the word that Peter used in 1 Peter 2:9, and translated "praises" – "show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

So, what is the first thing that the Apostle Peter said that we are to supply to our faith from what we have received from God in salvation? It is that wonderful evidence in the lives of God's people, be it ever so slight, which shows that Christ is in us! And this word also indicates that there will be in the way we live that same kind of commitment to do the will of God that was always evident in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And you see this is manifested by our faith. It is not easy to walk by faith. It is not easy to face the trials of life, and to say with our Lord as He faced the Cross, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

If you pick up Greg and Traci Stephenson's letter, you will learn how they reacted to what the doctors told them about their unborn baby. The doctors told them that they suspected that their baby had cystic fibrosis, but they would not know for sure until they tested him after he was born. But then they said this in their letter: "We trusted in our good and gracious God, knowing He makes no errors and this would be the child of His choice for us." And when I spoke to Traci on the phone yesterday, she said, "I know that this is according to God's plan for us." This is adding virtue to faith. This is a living faith. I am sure there have been plenty of tears shed in that household, but I am also sure that you have evidence of a true faith. This is just like the Lord's statements about drinking of the cup that the Father had given to Him.

Greg and Traci couldn't have a reaction like this is they were depending upon themselves. They have drawn upon the resources that they have in God, and in the Lord Jesus. And you can see their likeness to the Lord in

the way they have taken this. This is supplying our faith with virtue.

Our trials are all different, but whatever they may be, they provide us with the opportunity to trust God in a deeper way, and by God's grace to draw upon the resources that are ours in Christ.

Concl: Now the big question is, Are we bringing along that which we have in Christ, and applying them to our lives in order that the loveliness of Christ may be seen as we face the various experiences of our lives. God is working to make us like His Son, but you and I have responsibilities in what God is doing, turning to Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith, and trusting the Lord to work in us and for us and through us that His glorious and wonderful Name may be exalted through us.

MORE ADDITIONS FOR A STRONGER FAITH**Part 2**

2 Peter 1:5-7

Intro: We are obviously in a very important section of 2 Peter, but I can expand that by saying that this first chapter of 2 Peter is one of the most important chapters in all of the Bible. I say that because of what Peter said about it. Look, for example, at verse 8. And then listen to what Peter said in verses 10 and 11. But his emphasis doesn't end there. Listen to verses 12 through 16.

Now we need to keep in mind that Peter was not just writing for himself, but he was writing under the direction of the Spirit of God. And so this gives me the authority to say that what Peter was writing was not only extremely important to him, but it was even more important to the Holy Spirit. And if it is important to the Holy Spirit, and to the Apostle Peter, it ought to be very important to us!

After all, if there is truth that will make us fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, truth that will keep us from falling, and truth that will guarantee that we will have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then we all should say without any hesitation at all, "Let's hear what it is, and let's hear it now!" Every sincere Christian is grieved because it seems that he, or she, makes so little progress in growing in the Lord, and we can be equally grieved because we fail the Lord too often. So here, to say the least, help is promised!

Tonight I am going to be speaking on some events in the life of Peter which are recorded for us in the Gospels. And you will see from those experiences why Peter, as he neared the time when he would be with the Lord, was so intent about getting these truths into the hearts of believers everywhere! He said, "I am going to keep reminding you of these truths as long as I live, and I am making sure that after I am gone, you will continue to have 'these things' in your remembrance."

What things? Last Sunday I called your attention to Peter's repeated use of the words, "these things," which you find in verses 8 and 9 and 10 and 12 and 15. And since these words appear first in verse 8, it is reasonable to think that Peter in all of these, was referring to the "things" mentioned in verses 5, 6, and 7.

And this is where we are in our study of this first chapter of 2 Peter.

All of us who know the Lord have “faith.” No one can claim to have true faith who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Verse 1 in this chapter tells us that Peter was writing “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” And so faith is a gift from God, and we all have the same faith, and it is “precious” because it is from God, and because it is the only way of salvation. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16: 31). And I have reminded you on previous Sundays of Paul’s words in Eph. 2:8, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

But our faith needs to be strengthened, and this was Peter’s reason for emphasizing the words, the qualities, that are mentioned here in verses 5, 6, and 7.

Last Sunday we learned that “virtue” needs to be added to “faith.”

Two verses which I did not mention, and which may be of help to us in understanding “virtue,” are Phil. 4:8-9:

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

“Virtue,” as one writer expressed it, points to “the proper fulfillment of anything.” But we are thinking about “virtue” as it applies to a Christian. What is “the proper fulfillment” of a Christian? It is to partake of the divine nature, as we learned from verse 4 in this chapter. And to partake of the divine nature means that we are to become like Christ. Therefore, to add virtue to our faith is to demonstrate, to manifest in practical ways, something of the impact that Christ has in our lives. It may be ever so slight right after a person is saved, but there will be evidence of Christ in a believer’s life right from the first day of salvation.

So we take what we have received from Christ in salvation, and by God’s grace show that we have experienced a change. Matthew Henry identified “virtue” with *courage* and *strength*. It shows itself not only in positive ways, but also in negative ways, as the Apostle John indicated in 1 John 3:9:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Today I want to take up the next three words which the Apostle Peter added after speaking of virtue. And remember that all of these were intended by Peter to show how our faith is strengthened.

The first of the three is:

I. “KNOWLEDGE” (2 Peter 1:5b).

This was a special word which the Apostle Peter used in this epistle. See 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8; and 2:20 and 3:18.

In the Greek NT Peter used ἐπίγνωσις in verses 2, 3, and 8, but he used the simple γνῶσις in verses 5 and 6. The word that Peter used in verses 2, 3, and 8 speaks of a more mature knowledge, a knowledge that is the result of a better acquaintance with God. But the word that Peter used in the verses we are considering now is a more simple knowledge, but a growing knowledge. And it is important to see that when Peter used the word which we have in verses 2, 3, and 8, all of them are linked with knowing Christ or God, or both. So it is knowledge that is directed to a life of mature fellowship with the Members of the Godhead.

But in verses 5 and 6 where Peter said “add . . . to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance,” he was encouraging the first stages of learning which will ultimately bring us to a more complete knowledge, and especially the knowledge of the Persons of the Godhead.

But where do we find this knowledge?

Most of you know the answer. This was Peter’s way of directing those early believers to the Word of God. And let us be careful to bring those words, “giving all diligence, add” to each of the words that Peter has given us in this list. In connection with the Scriptures this would mean that they were to begin right away, and to stay busy at it, putting forth all of their time and strength to learning what God has given us in His Word. We can never learn it all, but it must take the greatest possible priority in the life of every child of God.

This meant that they were to read the Word of God. And it meant that they were to re-read it, and meditate on it, and to pray over it, not trusting

in their own wisdom to understand the Scriptures, but trusting in the Holy Spirit Who has been given to each one of us to guide us into the truth, and especially to take the things of Christ, and show them to us.

I think that too often we assume that Christians understand that they are to read the Bible, and to seek from God a growing understanding of the Word. But they don't understand this simple fact. They need to be told. They need to be encouraged to do it, and to do it regularly and faithfully all through their lives.

It is nice that we have some more recent translations of the Bible, but let none of us think that if we read one of the more recent translations, that we will be less dependent upon the Holy Spirit. The Bible is a closed book to everyone until we are taught by the Holy Spirit what it means. This means that we need to precede our reading with prayer for the Spirit's guidance and blessing in our reading. We all have the same Teacher, and even as you sit today listening to this message as we read through these verses together, don't depend upon me for your understanding. Hopefully the Holy Spirit will use me to help you, but all I can give you is what the Holy Spirit has given me. So right now let us be trusting the Holy Spirit to help us to understand these verses. And then it is the Holy Spirit who takes the Word as we learn it, and He shows us how the Word of God is to be applied to our lives.

Now we are talking about adding knowledge, the knowledge of the Word to our faith for the purpose of strengthening our faith. And here I need to remind you again of what the Apostle Paul said about faith and the Bible. His words are in Romans 10:17, and you have heard it many times from this pulpit. Paul speaking by the Holy Spirit said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The more we know about the Word, especially as we learn of God, and of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, the greater will be our faith.

Let me ask you: How diligent are you about reading your Bible? How long has it been since you memorized a verse of Scripture? And how faithful have you been in praying before you read your Bible? When you come to church do you sit down and ask the Lord to help you to learn from the message what He wants you to know? "Add to your faith . . . knowledge." God's Word is truth. Don't neglect it for even a single day.

But what is our next word?

II. "TEMPERANCE."

This is the Greek word for self-control. We find this word in only two other books of the NT. It, of course, is listed in Gal. 5:22-23 as a part of the fruit of the Spirit:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

In Acts 24:25 we find it mentioned as a part of Paul's message before Felix who was the Roman governor of Judea. This is what we are told in Acts 24:25:

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Let me call your attention to the last words of verse 4 here in 1 Peter 1. Speaking of the "exceeding great and precious promises" which God has given us, Peter added,

that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (1 Peter 1:4b).

This corruption that is in the world, is in our hearts as well. Every child of God needs to exercise self-control, but this is only possible by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul told the Galatians,

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

It is the Spirit of God Who gives us the desire and the strength to say "no" to sin. But we are responsible to seek from the Holy Spirit the power to resist temptation, as well as the power to do God's will. So there are both negative and positive aspects of self-control. How important it is to learn to walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit! The knowledge that we gain from the Word of God shows us the difference between right and wrong. In exercising self control, we are to choose the right, and resist the wrong. And right and wrong are determined by what is right in God's sight, and what is wrong in God's sight.

An excellent example of self-control is the action that Daniel and his three friends took after they were chosen among others to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. The king had appointed special food and drink for the young men, but this is what we are told in Daniel 1:8:

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself

with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

He knew what such a compromise could lead to, and he refused to defile himself – as did his three friends.

Our third and last word for today is:

III. "PATIENCE."

The main idea that most people have when we talk of patience, is that of waiting. We may say of a person we are meeting, but we are late in the appointment, that he or she was patiently waiting for us. And that idea is in the word. But it does mean waiting, and doing nothing but waiting. It means waiting and keeping busy with our responsibilities while we are waiting. And so the word carries with it the ideas of faithfulness and perseverance.

On one occasion the Lord was speaking to His disciples about His return to the earth, and a part of what He said is recorded for us in Matt 24:42-47. This is what the Lord said:

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

Occasionally we hear of people who supposedly are waiting for the Lord's return, and they dispose of all of their possessions, and go out on a hill some place, and wait for the Lord. That is not patience; that is foolishness. The word *patience* literally means *to remain under*. We persevere even when we are going through trials of some kind. It is like what is required of our servicemen even when they are prisoners of war; *they are still on active duty. So we persevere in doing whatever the Lord has given*

us to do even though we may be going through some trial of severe testing. Regardless of our circumstances, we always need to persevere; we always need to be faithful to the Lord. It is illustrated by the Puritans in England at the time when they were locked out of their churches back in 1662. If they couldn't preach in their churches, they preached in the open fields, and that is where their people came to hear the Word of God. That is the kind of patience that Peter was speaking about.

Faithfulness is a rare trait even among those of us who know the Lord. Solomon said long ago, "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" (Prov. 20:6).

When the apostles, Peter and John, were told not to speak at all nor to teach in the Name of Jesus, the way they responded showed the faithfulness, their intention to persevere. Listen to what they said.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).

So we persevere in living for the Lord, and we persevere as we serve the Lord, and we persevere while we wait for the blessing of the Lord.

Concl: One commentator said that he did not think that Peter intended for us to follow these words in order. I cannot accept that idea. I know that we may work on each of them at different times in some special way, but the wording suggests that one leads to another: "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience . . ." And so on to the end of verse 7. On definitely leads to the next.

But the question each of us needs to answer is, Where am I in all of this? What are the weak places in my life, in my relationship with the Lord? The promises attached to these words are so wonderful, so unbelievably good, that we cannot afford, any of us, to fail at any point in this gracious and glorious traits which we are told to be working on *right now*, and to continue working on each of them *without interruption*. Let us courageously and fervently pursue God's purpose in saving us, to make us like our Lord. And let us constantly seek a greater fellowship with all Three Persons of the Godhead, exercising self-control and perseverance by the grace of God, trusting the Lord to strengthen our faith for His own glory.

GODLINESS, BROTHERLY KINDNESS, AND LOVE**Part 3**

2 Peter 1:5-7

Intro: Today we come to the last three words which complete the list which the Apostle Peter has referred to as “these things” here in 2 Peter 1. Let me remind you again of the amazing promises and the very strong emphasis which the Apostle Peter placed upon them. Look again with me at verses 8, 9, 10, (11), 12, (13), (14), and 15. These were among the last words that the Apostle Peter wrote which were a part of the inspired Word of God. So they not only represent that which was extremely important to Peter, but that which was very, very important to the Holy Spirit Who was directing Peter as he wrote. And they ought to be not only important *now* to all of us who know the Lord, but they ought to be increasingly important to us as long as we live. I hope that you have written down what I have said in trying to explain each of these words, but also let me encourage you to read what others have written on this part of 2 Peter. And when I speak of those who have written on this chapter or this epistle, of course I am referring to godly men who believe this to be the Word of God, and who treat it as the Word of God.

All of us who are saved have “faith.” Our faith has come to us from God. But our faith needs to grow. Our faith needs to be strengthened. And this is a life-long project facing all of us. And the way we strengthen our faith is by adding to it “virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance [self-control]; and to temperance patience [perseverance]; and to patience” – and here we come to the words we will consider today – “godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity,” which is *love*.

We have faith, but we need:

- 1) Virtue.
- 2) Knowledge.
- 3) Self-control.
- 4) Perseverance.
- 5) Godliness.
- 6) Brotherly kindness.
- 7) Love.

Write those words down where you can see them frequently. Make them a part of your prayers when you pray for yourself, and when you pray for your family members who know the Lord, and when you pray for anyone else who belongs to the Lord. According to verse 8 they need to be *in us*,

in all of us, and they need to “abound.” That word would probably be better translated as *superabound*. It means to be adding more and more. We will never in this life be all that we need to be, and so we continue adding, continue growing, continue increasing and overflowing with all of these graces in our lives. We don’t have any of these by nature. They all are produced in us by the grace of God, and it is the Holy Spirit Who administers them to us. But we are responsible before God to make sure that these are what we are seeking from God for ourselves.

We have already discussed the first four; now let us look at the last three.

The fifth word in the list is:

I. “GODLINESS” (2 Peter. 1:6b-7a).

What does the word mean?

Vine in his Expository Dictionary defines it as “that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him.” He said that it means “to be devout.”

Adam Clarke said that it is the equivalent of fearing God, not in the sense that we are afraid of Him, but that we reverence Him as God, we adore Him, and seek to magnify Him in every aspect of our lives.

To be godly is to be God-centered. It speaks of that child of God who has learned to look for the will of God and the purposes of God in all the circumstances of his life. He sees the hand of God in everything, and is concerned about pleasing God in every aspect of His life. Matthew Henry recognized the relationship between “patience,” which comes just before “godliness,” and what patience and perseverance teaches us about the will of God in our lives.

Just as a simple illustration, a godless person talks about Mother Nature. A godly person says that God controls the weather. He makes the sun to shine, and the rain to fall, and the winds to blow, and the flowers to grow. A godless person talks about good luck and bad luck. A godly person knows that God is sovereign in the affairs of all people and nations. A godless person lives to please himself, and to seek his own goals. A godly person lives to please the Lord, and takes delight in doing the will of God.

Peter used this word in verse 3 of our chapter. You see it again in chapter

3, and verse 11. And we have the same idea in 2 Peter 2:9.

The Apostle Paul used this word many times in his Pastoral Epistles, which are 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. And these, by the way, were his last epistles. For example, turn with me to 1 Timothy and listen as I read the following verses:

- 1) 1 Tim. 2:1-2.
- 2) 1 Tim. 2:9-10.
- 3) 1 Tim. 3:16.
- 4) 1 Tim. 4:7-8.
- 5) 1 Tim. 6:3-12.

In 2 Timothy we have Paul's description of the "last days." Note his words in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, and then his statement in verse 8.

And then for a final passage, look with me at Titus 2:11-15.

I have no hesitation in saying today that the greatest need of the church today is for godly people who will live godly lives. Pleasing God because we love Him should be the primary purpose that we have every day that we live. Do you find this "in you" today?

But let us move on to the sixth in this series of words:

II. "BROTHERLY KINDNESS" (2 Peter 1:7).

This word is translated elsewhere in Scripture as "brotherly love."

Let me quote what Matthew Henry had to say about this word:

We must add brotherly-kindness, a tender affection to all our fellow-Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travellers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance, and therefore are to be loved with a pure heart fervently, with a love of complacency, as those who are peculiarly near and dear to us, in whom we take particular delight.

In speaking of loving God's people with a "pure heart fervently," he was referring to Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:21-22. (Read.) And he also referred to Psalm 16 where we read what David said about the people of God. Let me read it to you as it is translated in the NKJ:

2 O my soul, you have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from You."

3 As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight" (Psa. 16:2-3).
(NKJ)

— Paul used this word in Romans 12:10 where he wrote:

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

And he used it again in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10:

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

In Hebrews 13:1 we read, "Let brotherly love continue." And then he added by way of explanation:

2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body (Heb. 13:2-3).

— Although the Apostle John did not use this particular word, yet he was speaking of the same truth when he wrote 1 John 3:14:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

And then he added in verses 16 through 18:

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

We are to add to "godliness brotherly kindness." A person who does not love the Lord's people, does not love the Lord. John said this in 1 John 4:20-21:

— 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who

loveth God love his brother also.

Now again let me say that when we were saved, we received a measure of all of these graces in our lives, but we need to “add” to them. We need to grow in our love for each other. I hope there is no one here today who loves the people of the world more than he or she loves the people of God. If so, if that is you, there is something very wrong in your heart. Love for the Lord’s people, and a love to be with them, and to be like them, and to minister to them, is one of the first evidences we have that we have come to know the Lord, as Peter said in his first epistle. But we need to love each other more and more. And to love each other means that we will do all that we can to seek the spiritual good of the people of God who are our acquaintances. This means praying for them. This means living so as to be an example to them. And it means helping them in any way that we can.

But now let us move on to the last word in this series of seven:

III. “CHARITY” (2 Peter 1:7).

This is the familiar Greek word, ἀγάπη. It is the same word that is used for the love that we have for each other as believers. But we have been speaking of brotherly love, and so Peter must have had another idea when he used this word right after speaking of our love for each other as believers.

And I think that if you will consider thoughtfully and prayerfully this word in this place, you will have to agree that Peter was speaking about people in the world who are without Christ.

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the churches of Galatia, he gave them a word which applies to Peter’s use of the word “love” here in 2 Peter. These are the words to which I am referring:

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:7-10).

Let me read a passage to you from our Lord's Sermon on the Mount in which He touched upon this verse subject. It is found in Matt. 5:43-48:

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The Apostle Paul said this in his letter to the church at Thessalonica:

See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men (1 Thess. 5:15).

And toward the end of Paul's first letter to Timothy, we find these words:

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

And do you remember Paul's words to Titus in Titus 3:8?

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Years ago there was a little chorus that we used to sing, and I believe it was written by one of the Presidents of the Moody Bible Institute. I think that it illustrated what Peter had in mind when he used this little word ἀγάπη at the end of this series of words. The chorus went like this:

Love this world through me, Lord, this world of broken men.

Thou didst love in death, Lord, oh love in me again.

Souls are in despair, Lord, oh make me know and care.

When my life they see, may they behold Thee,
Oh, love this world through me, through me,
Oh, love this world through me.

— What was it that made Hudson Taylor leave the comforts of England to go to China to live as a Chinaman and dress as the Chinese and learn that difficult language if it were not for His love for God and for His desire to see people saved. What made John Knox cry out to God, “Give me Scotland, or I die!” Was it not a feeling of compassion for people in their sins, on the way to hell, and without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If such a love were not in the heart of the Apostle Paul he would never have written those words at the beginning of his epistle to the Romans in which he said,

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:14-16).

— We are not to love the world as a godless system. It is under the judgment of God, and “is passing away.” But our Savior during His time here on earth spent His live “doing good,” doing good to people who just wanted His help, but most of whom did not want Him. But He continued to do good anyway, and many who experienced the healing of their bodies also experienced the salvation of their souls. We never know when and with whom God may see fit to touch the hearts of sinners, but it is for us to be like our Savior Who came “to seek and to save those who were lost.”

If there were ever a day in which it is apparent that people need Christ, it is the day in which we live. Sin is destroying people every day, and only those who know Christ have the remedy. It is in the Gospel. May God give us the same compassion toward people in the world that moved our Lord Jesus Christ to come into this world as a Man, and to die for sinner, move our hearts to spread this message of salvation wherever we can.

Concl: It certainly is not by chance that all of these words lead up to “love.” Our witness is not just in the message we carry, but in the people we are. People who add to their faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love, will not only be a holy people who are deter-

mined to please God, and a happy people, but a people whose lives will bear testimony to the marvelous grace of God toward sinners, and who will be instruments in God's hand for blessing in this world. May the Lord make us good and faithful *adders* in these evil days.