

THE SAME PRECIOUS FAITH
2 Peter 1:1, 2

Intro: We begin today the study of the second Epistle of Peter.

I hope you will all read it over and over--perhaps even once a day. Perhaps some of you will be hungry enough for spiritual blessing that you will memorize it. May our minds and hearts be involved in meditating upon the truths that we will find in these three chapters, and may the Holy Spirit enable us to make it our own so that our lives will be greatly improved in a way that will be pleasing to the Lord.

Many have questioned whether or not this letter was actually written by the Apostle Peter. One of the main reasons for questioning his authorship is the difference in language between the first and second epistles. The same argument has been used against the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. But we need to recognize that a different subject will often necessitate the use of different words, and even of a different style. Besides, to say that a man's letters in Scripture must always follow the same pattern and vocabulary is to put limitations upon the Spirit of God Who was able to direct the writers of Scripture as He saw fit.

There are similarities, however, and we are going to be looking at a couple of them this morning as we think about the words Peter used in the first two verses of chapter one.

If Peter did not write this Epistle, then it is a forgery, and is of no value at all--since his name appears at the beginning of the letter. Whoever wrote this also claimed to have been present at the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ. It could not have been James who wrote this because he was already dead, and John would have no reason to use Peter's name since there are other books in the NT which have been attributed to him even though his name was not used as the writer except in the case of the book of the Revelation.

Furthermore--and this is a point that I have not noticed in any writings that I have consulted on this Epistle, although it may very well be in come--can we imagine that God would allow a spurious book to remain with the true books all through these years? We overlook the fact that the books of the Bible are not only God-breathed, but they have been preserved by God so that we still have it today, the same pure Word of God.

So I have no question in my mind but that this Epistle was written by the Apostle Peter, that it was written to the same believers to whom the first was written, and that it was written a year or two after the first Epistle, probably in the year 67 or 68 A.D., shortly before Peter's death.

Why did Peter write this Epistle?

In one way, it was for the same reason that 1 Peter was written: to encourage believers who were suffering for the sake of the Gospel and of Christ. They were the objects of great persecution.

By the time Peter wrote this second Epistle, another problem had developed. There were false teachers among them, and so their difficulties were not only external, but internal. This called for two things which Peter emphasized strongly in this second Epistle:

- 1) They needed to know and be assured about what they believed. People who do not know what they believe are going to be affected by every wind of doctrine that comes along.
- 2) They needed to keep pressing on in their lives as Christians, not remaining where they were when they were first saved, but GROWING! This was his final, parting word to them in 2 Pet. 3:18, but he touched upon it in this first chapter.

May our consideration of this Epistle encourage and strengthen us to do what Peter wanted those saints to do so long ago. Let me state it in two words: KNOW and GROW. Know the truth of God. Know the teachings of Scripture. And grow in your knowledge of them, and grow in the impact that they are to have upon your life, making you more holy in your life and more devoted to your God and to your Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. If our time in this Epistle affects all of us this way, then our time in it will not have been spent in vain. It is always tragic if we can give ourselves to any portion of Scripture, and still remain unchanged in our minds and hearts.

We are going to look very carefully at every part of this book, and I want to direct your attention to just the first two verses for our time together this morning.

We have three things in these two verses:

- I. THE WRITER (v. 1a).
- II. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE LETTER (v. 1b).
- III. THE GREETING (v. 2).

I. THE WRITER (2 Pet. 1:1a).

The actual form which Peter used here was Simeon Peter. The only other time that Simeon is used is in Acts 15:14. It was his Jewish name, and Peter may have used it here to show his desire to identify himself with, not deny, his relationship with his Jewish brethren.

But it was as if Jacob had said, Jacob Israel--the old and the new, what he was by nature, and what he was by grace, since Peter was the name given to him by our Lord Jesus Christ. It means, rock. We will learn more about his name tonight as we begin the study of his life.

In his first Epistle he called himself simply, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ," but here he wrote, "a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." He was His Lord's bondservant before he was "an apostle"--utterly devoted to the Lord and to doing his will right up to the end (which he knew was near, and death by martyrdom).

In speaking of himself as "a servant" of the Lord he was taking his place with David who said in Psa. 116:16,
 O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant,
 and the son of thine handmaid:
 thou hast loosed my bonds.

This was the term used by Paul many times, and when we look into the OT we see many who used this of themselves--Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Job, to name a few. This is a term which can be claimed by all of the people of God, although none of us is an apostle. Yet there was the consciousness in Peter's heart, which evidently got stronger as he got older, that he had been raised up as one through whom the Lord Jesus Christ was going to accomplish His work. THERE IS NO GREATER HONOR THAT ANY MAN CAN CLAIM THAN THAT OF BEING A SERVANT OF THE LORD: The Lord Himself said,
 If any man serve me, let him follow me;
 and where I am, there shall also my servant be:
 if any man serve me, him will my Father honour
 (John 12:26).

Peter's claim to be "an apostle" meant that he wanted his Epistle to be accepted as the word of the Lord. It was written with the stamp of divine authority upon it.

What a tender and loving way for him to identify himself! To him, Jesus Christ was worth living for, and also worth dying for, if that were the will of God.

II. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE LETTER (2 Pet. 1:1b).

Paul used a very interesting word for "obtained." It not only means that they had received this faith, but that it had been assigned to them. It is a word that Peter used to describe, not only that our faith is given to us, but that it is ours by God's sovereign will. Salvation is not a matter of man deciding to become a child of God, but of man believing in Christ because he has been chosen by God before the foundation of the world.

"Like precious faith"--a very interesting expression.

Peter loved the word "precious," and he used it several times in these two Epistles which bear his name. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:7, 19; 2:4, 6, 7; 2 Pet. 1:1, 4. It seems to me that Peter was talking about the faith that is exercised

for our salvation. It is given to us by God. Cf. Eph. 2: 8, 9. It is this faith that is tried. It is precious because there is no other way to be saved. If we do not have faith in Christ, it makes no difference who we are nor how many good things we have tried to do for God or our fellowmen, we are not saved, and we will not go to heaven. So Peter treasured his faith, that which God had given to him, and that which rested firmly upon Jesus Christ, and which had resulted in all of the spiritual blessings which had been poured out upon his life.

But it is "like precious faith" because every person who has true faith has the same kind of faith, and the same kind of spiritual benefits that the Apostle Peter had. His was not a special kind of salvation, but the same salvation that every sinner must have if he is to have his sins forgiven, and to be assured that some day he will be in heaven.

But how can we possibly claim to have such marvelous faith, such "like precious faith"?

It is only through the righteousness of the One Who is our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. (This seems to be the best reading.) In the more than 30 years that had passed since the death and resurrection of Christ, Peter's faith in the Deity of Christ was stronger than ever, and his faith in the work of Christ was just as strong as it ever had been. This is the Gospel. Paul stated it this way in speaking of what God had done for sinners through the death of Christ:

For he (God) hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us,
who knew no sin;
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him
(2 Cor. 5:21).

Or to arrange the words in a different way so that there will be no question as to Who the Sinless One is, we could say,

For He (God) hath made Him (Christ), Who knew no sin,
to be sin for us,
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This is our standing before God, in the righteousness of God Himself and of Christ, made possible through God's satisfaction with the work of His Son on our behalf, THEN NOTHING CAN EVER HAPPEN TO CHANGE THE GRACIOUS AND GLORIOUS RELATIONSHIP THAT WE HAVE WITH GOD AND CHRIST! And this is another reason that our faith is "precious."

And so this letter was written to all who share the faith of Peter. It is for me, and it is for you. As we consider it together, let us take it just as personally as if it were written specifically by Peter for us. And I trust that, during the time we are considering this letter from

Peter, we will see others manifesting that they, too, have received this "like precious faith" from God and from Christ. There is no other way to be saved.

(Notice Peter's passages also where we have the word believe in some form: 1 Pet. 1:21; 2:6, 7. We have "the faith" in 1 Pet. 5:9.)

III. THE GREETING (2 Pet. 1:2).

Here we have those familiar, yet, oh so important, words: "Grace and peace." And, like in the first Epistle, it was Peter's prayer for the saints to whom he was writing that "grace and peace" would "be multiplied" to them.

The arithmetic of the Bible is very interesting. Here is divine multiplication. When we get down to v. 5 we will be talking about addition. We know that God has taken away, subtracted our sins, and that He has separated, divided us, from the world.

"Grace" is the strength which the Lord gives us to do His will, to endure our trials, to glorify His Name. "Peace" is that quietness of heart which results from the grace of God in our lives. We need them every day, every hour, that we live. And so we need to have them multiplied to us. Multiplication is a simple way of adding, isn't it? If our grace from God is to be multiplied, it means that we will get grace, and then grace, and then more grace, and on and on, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year--all throughout our lives. God's grace and God's peace are inexhaustible, and they are always sufficient regardless of what our circumstances might be. Our need never quits, and God's supply never runs out.

But how is this grace and this peace measured out to us--and here we come to one of the main points of this second Epistle. It is "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." The fulness of our grace and peace is directly related to the extent to which we know our God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. If your knowledge of them is increasing, so will your experience of the grace and peace which comes from Them. The reason that a lot of Christians have so little strength and so little peace is because they know so little about God and about Christ.

And the word that Peter used here for "knowledge" is a word which means full knowledge. It speaks of a knowledge that is increasing, that is growing, that is becoming clearer and more precious all of the time. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:18.

But where do we get this knowledge? There is only one place

that I know of. It is in this Book, the Word of God. That is why I keep after you to read it, to memorize it, to meditate on it. Listen to the preachers who will help you to know God better, and to know the Lord Jesus better. Read the books that will increase your knowledge of God and His Word. Fill your mind and heart with the truth about God and about the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will see how the grace of God and the peace of God will flow into your heart in a never-failing stream of blessing. But if you ignore your Bible, your grace and peace will come in short supply.

Concl: The knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ--an inexhaustible subject. Learn all you can, but you will never learn it all. The more you learn about God and about the Lord Jesus Christ, the more you will love Them, and the more you will trust them, and the more you will long for the day when faith will be turned to sight and you will be with them for all eternity. This is what we need.

Have you been noticing the controversy that has been raging again over our public schools, and the failure of many of our teachers to give our American young people content? There are many of our teachers who are and have been concerned about giving real substance to their pupils, but I am afraid that it is true that thousands of young people have been graduated from the high schools of our country who do not know how to read or write or add or subtract, who know nothing about history, who have never been taught the things that are really of value in this life. We have given our children what they want rather than what they need. This applies to our homes as well. Our worldly-wise counsellors teach us how to work around our responsibilities rather than to accept them and to carry them out. We have been more concerned about how to, than what!

But let me say this: the visible, professing, local church has fallen into the same trap. The church has studiously avoided content. People do not want doctrine. Many pastors are not prepared to teach doctrine. People want to know how to raise their children, how to have happy homes, how to build up their self-worth, but they are not interested in hearing about God; they are not interested in learning about the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, they have no strength (grace); they have no peace. And it is very likely that there are millions who profess to be Christians have never known anything about this "like precious faith." If you have come to know Christ, you will not be satisfied over the long haul with a ministry that does not teach you more about our God and our Saviour and the Holy Spirit Who has been given to all who know the Lord. As Peter wrote in this Epistle, these, too, are days when we need to make our calling and election sure. If you do not love to hear of Christ, if you do not long to hear of Him, it is probably true that you do not know Him. May God enable us to understand where we are in our relationship with Him!

PARTAKERS OF GOD'S NATURE

2 Peter 1:3, 4

Intro: My text for today is verses 3 and 4 of chapter 1. They really are a part of Peter's greeting in vv. 1, 2, and yet they also introduce the message of the Epistle.

Peter made it clear in v. 1 that he was writing to those who were his fellow-believers in Christ--to use his words, "to them that have obtained like precious faith . . ."

And then in v. 2 he gave both his greeting to them, and told them how he was praying for them. Since they were believers in Christ, they had "grace and peace," but he wanted to see that "multiplied"! And this is really the dominant theme of his Epistle. He wanted them to grow in their faith. He wanted their faith to be strengthened. He wanted them to go on to greater and greater spiritual maturity.

To state it another way, he wanted them to know that they must not be satisfied that they had faith; they must add to that faith according to what we read in vv. 5-9 (which, the Lord willing, will be my text for next Sunday morning).

Now, in order for us to grow as Christians, we need to be clear in our understanding as to what it means to be a Christian, that is, the definition of a Christian. AND THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE IN OUR TEXT FOR TODAY. In fact, this is probably one of the clearest, and yet most amazing definitions of a Christian, that we have in all of the NT.

Let us examine these two verses under four headings:

- 1) THE DIVINE PROVISION (v. 3a).
- 2) THE DIVINE PURPOSE (v. 3b).
- 3) THE DIVINE PROMISES (v. 3a).
- 4) THE DIVINE DELIVERANCE (v. 3b).

I. THE DIVINE PROVISION (2 Pet. 1:3a).

When we talk about salvation, always remember that we are talking about that which God in His grace has provided for us through the exercise of his own sovereign power. Salvation is not something that we do for ourselves. It is not even something that we help God to do for us. Salvation is a divine work. It is God exercising His power in our behalf.

Cf. what Paul said about it in Rom. 1:16. Also Eph. 2:8, 9.

Salvation is a gift. It is not a reward. Note the word "given." And this word carried with it the idea of giving something abundantly.

But be sure to note those words, "all things that pertain

unto life and godliness."

To be a Christian is to have "life," eternal life. This is what John 3:16 tells us. But Peter would have us know that the fact that we have life will be manifested in what he calls, "godliness." This is practical God-likeness. It is godly behavior, a godly life.

We will see more about this amazing change when we consider v. 4, but note that Peter was teaching here what Paul taught in his Epistles, and what the Lord Jesus taught, and what we learn through all of Scripture. And that is that to be a Christian is to have been changed, transformed, born again, made new, by the mighty power of our God through the Lord Jesus Christ. For a person to claim to be a Christian, and yet go on living his life in the same way that he did before, is a contradiction of all of Scripture. The Word of God teaches us that, if there is no change--and inward and outward change, then there is no salvation.

And how does this come about?

It is "through the knowledge of him that hath called us."

Peter, as well as Paul, placed a great premium on "knowledge" --the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Christ. In fact, this was the way that our Lord defined what it means to have eternal life. Cf. John 17:3,

And this is eternal life,
that they might know thee the only true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.

Salvation begins when we come to know God, and it is to continue by increasing in that knowledge as long as we live here on this earth.

Again, thinking of Paul, he said, "I know whom I have believed . . ." (2 Tim. 1:12b). He did not merely know about Him; he knew HIM!

But, before we leave Peter's statement, "through the knowledge of him that hath called us," let us note the word, "called."

This explains why we have come to God, why we have come to Christ. It is not our doing, but it is God's calling.

There are two kinds of calls in Scripture. There is (1) the general call which we are authorized in Scripture to give when we call all men to repentance and faith. But there is also (2) the effectual call, that work of God in the hearts of those whom He actually brings to Himself. We speak of it as effectual because it is effective. No person is ever

saved without that effectual call of God.

So God calls us by His divine power, He calls us to faith in Christ, He calls us to eternal life which results in a godly life. AND IN BLESSING US WITH SALVATION HE HAS "GIVEN UNTO US ALL THINGS THAT PERTAIN UNTO LIFE AND GODLINESS."

Note: "ALL THINGS." He does not give us just some of the things that we will need in being and doing what He wants us to be and do, but we have "ALL THINGS." He has given us His Son, and we have all things in Him. Cf. 1 John 5:12.

This is very important for us to know, and it illustrates how important it is to KNOW the truth of God.

To hear some preachers and some other people, too, talk about the Christian life, they would make you think that you are having all of those problems because you do not have all that you need to have. That is not true. The problem is that you are not using what you already have in Christ. Perhaps you have not even learned what you have in Christ. Cf. Eph. 1:3.

Now can you see why I have called this first part of v. 3, THE DIVINE PROVISION? It is an abundant provision, a sufficient provision, a total provision. Nothing that you need for eternal life and godliness is lacking. You have it all because you have God in your life; you have Christ! OH, HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KNOW THIS.

But let us go on to our second point:

II. THE DIVINE PURPOSE (2 Pet. 1:3b).

The purpose of God in salvation has many aspects to it. We have already seen a part of it. A part is that we would have "life." Another is that we should be "godly" in our character and in our behavior. It is God's purpose in salvation that we should know Him, that we should know His Son, and that we should increase in that knowledge. But the end of v. 3 here in our text tells us that God has "called us TO GLORY AND VIRTUE." This has to do with the ultimate and eternal realization of God's purpose in saving us. To be "called . . . TO GLORY AND VIRTUE" is to be called to share the likeness and excellence of God Himself! John, the Apostle, expressed it like this:

. . . we shall be like him; for we shall see him
as he is (1 John 3:2b).

The Apostle Paul said it this way:

For whom he (God) did foreknow,
he also did predestinate

to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29b).

God's glory is what He is in Himself; His virtue indicates

what He is uniquely and above everyone else. In all of the heavens and the earth there is none like our God; there is none like our Lord Jesus Christ; there is none like the Holy Spirit! This is one thing that the Psalmist had in mind when he said,

O Lord our Lord,
how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
(Psa. 8:1a, 9).

The end of v. 1 in that Psalm reads,
. . . who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Just think of it: God was not satisfied just to forgive us and cleanse us. He was not satisfied just to make us His children, members of His family. He was not satisfied just to promise us heaven. No, He could only be satisfied by making us like Himself, and like His Son.

This is the crowning glory of His purpose. This is ultimately why He has saved us, why He has called us to Himself. And it ought to be uppermost in our hearts and minds every day that we live. We need even now, every day, to be moving in that direction.

But there is another thing here:

III. THE DIVINE PROMISES (2 Peter 1:4a).

This subject of salvation gets more wonderful the longer we contemplate what it is.

Here we learn that, in order for God to accomplish His great and glorious purpose, He has seen fit to make His people "partakers of the divine nature." We have our old sinful nature, but we also have a new nature, and it is "the divine nature."

But how did this happen?

It has come about through those "exceeding great and precious promises"--those "promises" which are contained in the Gospel message, the promises which make us the Gospel. This is what it means to be saved. We have the promise of forgiveness, of redemption, of propitiation, of reconciliation, of life eternal, of the Holy Spirit, of Christ, of God, and on and on we could go.

And remember: a promise is not something that we are to do; a promise is something that we are to believe. And these promises, because of what God is accomplishing through His faithfulness to them, are called "exceeding great and precious," or the greatest and precious promises. The world is

full of promises of all kinds, but there never have been promises like these. These are even "above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). These are things that never would "have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9).

But a promise is only as good as the one who made the promise. That is what gives us such hope. These are the promises of God--and He has never failed to keep any promise that He ever made!

Think of it: These "exceeding great and precious promises" have been "given unto us"--not because we deserve them, but because God has chosen us, called us, and brought us to Himself that we might have this great and glorious life in His Son Who died for us.

One more thing:

IV. THE DIVINE DELIVERANCE (2 Pet. 1:4b).

In the words of the Apostle Paul, God
 . . . hath delivered us from the power of darkness,
 and hath translated us
 into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).
 Peter said in his first Epistle that God
 hath called you out of darkness
 into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9b).

The person who has nothing but the world has nothing but corruption. That which corrupts is that which pollutes, that which defiles, that which perverts and destroys, that which ultimately ruins and rots. Corruption is the opposite of "life and godliness."

God has delivered us from it all. The world may have corrupted us in the past, but the designs of the Evil One have been totally overruled in the life of a Christian. We are no longer in danger of that final corruption which is the lot of those who are still "of the world." God has delivered us through Christ.

This is Peter's word of assurance for us. Cf. the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 5:24.

Concl: All that Peter has told us so far is doctrine. He has been emphasizing the importance of knowing God, of knowing Christ, of knowing what our salvation actually is--how we get it, and what it does and will do in us and to us and for us. May the Lord teach us what these wonderful words mean as they relate to each one of us who is saved. For anyone without this salvation, the One you need is Christ. He is God's provision for guilty, lost, and hopeless sinners. I issue the general call for you to come to Christ; may God issue it directly and personally to your own needy heart!

DILIGENCE AND ITS REWARD
2 Peter 1:5-9

(Note: This passage actually goes to v. 11. The point that Peter was making had to do with making our "calling and election sure" (v. 10). In other words, assurance of salvation. The reward of this diligence mentioned in vv. 5, 10 (v. 5, the noun; v. 10, the verb) is given in vv. 8, 10, 11.

Intro: Most of us have profited a great deal from books published by The Banner of Truth. In my estimation The Banner publishes more of the really good books than all of the other publishers put together. They are responsible for giving us many of the Puritan writings, books that were unavailable a short time ago, and many other books, old and new, that really minister to the hearts and minds and lives of the people of God.

They have published several books by Dr. John Brown, a minister in Scotland, who was born in 1780 and died in 1858. His greatest years of blessing were in Edinburgh from 1829 until his death in 1858.

Among his books is a commentary on Hebrews, a two-volume commentary on 1 Peter, and a one-volume commentary on 2 Peter 1. As far as I know, he never wrote on chapters 2 and 3.

In saying why he did not write on chapters 2 and 3, he gave the explanation that he did not feel satisfied with his understanding of those latter two chapters, and felt that he should postpone writing on them until he felt that he knew them the way he knew chapter 1.

But he also mentioned that chapter 1 was really a unit that could stand by itself. If every Christian could really understand and appropriate for himself the truth of this chapter, there would be much greater joy in the Church of Jesus Christ, more blessing, and greater usefulness. In fact, Peter has told us in this chapter how important "these things" were to himself, and how profitable they could be to every child of God.

Cf. "these things" in vv. 8, 9, 10, 12, 15.

What are "these things"? They are the things mentioned in vv. 5-7: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love, and charity (love). There are eight of "these things" that Peter says we need to be concerned about in our lives as Christians. The result, or results, are the very things that every real Christian needs and wants. There are four results mentioned in vv. 8, 10 (2), and 11.

There is another interesting thing about our text that has come

to my attention.

Most of us are, or should be, acquainted with the name of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London from 1943 until 1968, but he went to Westminster in 1938 as an associate pastor working with Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. He died in 1981.

Many of his works are in print. He spent his last years writing. But the first book of his that I ever read, and I strongly recommend it to you, was, Spiritual Depression, Its Cause and Cure. One of his messages in that book is on our text. And he cited at that time that this chapter gives us the cure for one of the major reasons that Christians get depressed. And he focused attention on the word that Peter used here in v. 5 and which he repeated in v. 10--the word "diligence." Dr. Lloyd-Jones interpreted it as meaning discipline. And he pointed out that one reason for so much unhappiness and dissatisfaction among believers is that they live undisciplined lives. They have faith. They believe the Gospel. They are trusting in Christ for their salvation, But their faith today is what it was years ago because they have never added anything to it.

There is also a commentary that has been published, written by Dr. Lloyd-Jones, on 2 Peter, in which he dealt with the importance of this passage for Christians.

But both Dr. Brown and Dr. Lloyd-Jones, and I am sure others, too, who believed in the sovereign grace of God in salvation, were quick to point out that this is not salvation by faith and works, nor is the faith that we have incomplete in any way. But what Peter was encouraging here is that our faith needs to be strengthened. Having faith, we need to see our faith grow. Other ingredients need to be put with it, but even these are the result of God's work in us and they do not leave us any room to glory in what we have done for ourselves.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones pointed out that Christians get depressed because they have the wrong idea about faith. They use it as an excuse to be lazy. They are not growing and they are not doing the things which, under God's blessing, will produce spiritual growth. They have little or no discipline in their lives.

I am not going to try to get through this passage today. In fact, we may spend several Sundays on vv. 5-11. I want these truths to get into my heart in a greater way, and I want them to get into yours hearts, too, until we will all see why Peter felt that "these things" were so important.

But, to begin, let us turn our attention to that word, "diligence."

I. THE NEED FOR DILIGENCE (1 Pet. 1:5a).

Note the words, "And beside this, giving all diligence . . ."

These words mark Peter's transition from that which is doctrinal to that which is practical. But the words that he used at the beginning of v. 5 would be better translated, For this very reason . . . He was not saying that we are to do something in addition to what God has done in saving us, but that we are to do what he was about to say on the basis of what God has done, drawing upon that work, getting our power from the work of salvation itself.

Note that Peter did not tell them to "add" faith. They already had "faith." It was given to them by God. It is sustained and strengthened by the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22, 23). And so we need to see that Peter was writing to believers in Christ. It is the worst kind of folly for men generally to take a passage like this and try to make something out of it for themselves. Nobody can live who does not have life. Nobody can live as a Christian until he or she becomes a Christian. And being a Christian is a work which God does in our hearts through the work of His Son on the Cross.

Note again what is involved in our salvation according to vv. 1-4 of this chapter. That is the foundation. It is only because of what God is done that there is any possibility that we can do what we need to do.

To be diligent is to be zealous, to be earnest, and it includes the idea of losing no time in doing what you are doing. It needs to be done today, not tomorrow, is the idea in diligence. These are the things that we are to consider the most important in our lives.

Illus: Carolyn acquainting us with the Franklin Day Planner. Two of the main things that are emphasized are:

- 1) planning your day,
- 2) setting your priorities for the day.

I think that Peter would agree with that. We need to ask ourselves the question every day, What should have the greatest priority today among all of the things that I have to do? I may have a work schedule that I must keep, or school hours that have been set for me, but what is the most important thing that I have to do? What should have A-1 priority?

Peter would say, "Your faith needs to have the greatest priority." By that he would not mean that you must neglect your responsibilities. NO! He told us in 1 Peter that we need to be good citizens, good servants, good wives, good our relationships with each other. He was not saying to neglect that. BUT HE WAS SAYING THAT ALL OF THAT NEEDS TO BE WORKED AROUND THE DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF OUR FAITH.

If it means going to bed earlier so I can get up earlier, then I need to do that. If there is a conflict between some pleasure, and my time with the Lord, which is to have the priority?

If we do not make time for "these things," there will never be time for them. We are all struggling every day to get all of the things done that we need to do. A vital part of having enough time is placing the right priority on the things that are the most important--and nothing is more important than our relationship with the Lord.

GIVE ALL DILIGENCE. Time is precious. Time is fleeting. A diligent Christian will be on the lookout for spare moments throughout the day when he can redeem the time and make progress in the things of the Lord.

If you need to make some changes in your life pattern, I hope that you will do it--by the grace of God!

But let us look at the next words in v. 5:

II. THE NEED TO ADD (2 Pet. 1:5a).

This word "add" is an interesting word. It conveys the idea of nourishing or strengthening or supplying that which will fill it out and make it what it ought to be.

It is a word which originally had to do with a chorus that would sing in the Greek theaters. It had to do with having enough money to pay the singers as well as having the correct number, or proportion, of singers--sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses.

It could be likened to mixing the proper ingredients so as to have the correct medicine.

Peter was using it here to speak of the cultivation of a stronger faith, a growing faith, a vital faith. Nothing is more important in our lives than our faith, our trust in God. But there are perhaps very few of us who actually realize what is involved in trusting the Lord. We all know the feeling of the man who said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

But let me say another thing about adding.

We do not add "virtue" to faith, and then forget about it, going on to "knowledge," etc. We continue to add all of these throughout our lives. Peter has placed them in this order to show their relationship to each other--again, priorities. All are added to faith. One leads to another.

But we never get finished with any of them. THESE SEVEN THINGS ARE ALWAYS TO HAVE THE GREATEST PRIORITY IN OUR LIVES. WITHOUT THEM OUR FAITH CANNOT BE STRONG. AND WITHOUT A STRONG FAITH WE ARE GOING TO BE SERIOUSLY LACKING IN THE ABILITY TO PLEASE GOD. Cf. Heb. 11:6.

Now we are ready to look at "these" seven "things":

- 1) Virtue.
- 2) Knowledge.
- 3) Temperance.
- 4) Patience.
- 5) Godliness.
- 6) Brother kindness.
- 7) Charity (love).

Their order is important. We are to begin with "virtue," and it all leads up to "love." It is important that we understand each one, especially in the light of the promises that Peter attached to them as far as results are concerned.

I won't try to get into them today. Time will not permit. But next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will begin to examine them one by one.

Their importance is surely seen by the place that they had in Peter's ministry. He had spoken about them before. He did not hesitate to write about them again. And, as long as he lived, he would continue to speak of them. And even after he died, he wanted to leave them in written form for his flock, and so we have them here in 2 Peter.

Concl: But let me conclude on this one point that I have stressed with you today: How diligent, how disciplined, are you about your faith? Has it had the greatest priority in your life this past week, or have there been other things that have crowded out that which would contribute to making your faith stronger and your relationship with the Lord more vital? Are you in control of your life, or are you controlled by other people, or other things? What place does the Lord have? How serious are you about being a better Christian, and about living your life to glorify God?

And let me point back to verses 1 through 4 when I say, what do you know down deep in your heart about what the Lord did for you when He saved you, the power that is available to you, the resources that you have in Christ, the transformation that the Lord Jesus Christ has made in your heart?

God does not intend for us to proceed on our own. We need Him, we need Christ. We need the Holy Spirit. We need the Word. And we have Them! We have the Word! So drawing our strength from all that we have in Christ, let us go on--faithfully, diligently, fervently, knowing that the rewards are very great!

"THESE THINGS"

2 Peter 1:5-7

Intro: Today we are ready to look into the meaning of the words in verses 5, 6, and 7. These words are the words which Peter had in mind when he spoke of "these things" in verses 8, 9, 10, 12, and 15. No words can possibly be more important to us as Christians. We start with faith, but we need to "add" "these things" to our faith--"things" which are not actually additions, but "things" which are potential in our faith, and "things" which strengthen and mature the faith which we have as a gift from God.

John Owen, in his exposition of Psalm 130 (Vol. 6, p. 340) wrote about Christians who, while they were not "wholly devoid of spiritual life" (or they would not be Christians), "yet" remain all of their lives "poor, barren, sapless, withering creatures" not because "these things" are not in them, but because they are not, as Peter said, abounding in us! How descriptive these words are of many of us in our day who profess to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is no wonder that Peter was devoting the remainder of his life to the teaching of "these things," and that he was writing them down so that the people of God would have them to read over and over after he had been taken to heaven. (See vv. 12-16.)

But let us remember two things:

- 1) "Faith" is the foundation of all that Peter was saying here. If we do not have "faith," there is no need of thinking about adding to that "faith." And so we need to make sure of our faith first of all.
- 2) We must remember that our "faith" and everything necessary for the maturing of our faith actually comes to us from God. "Faith" does not originate with us. It originates with God. See v. 1, and follow that with vv. 3 and 4. All three of these verses say that we have either "obtained" what we have as our faith, or that they have been "given" to us. This is a very important point.

However, if we want our "faith" to be a strong faith, if we want to be flourishing and fruitful Christians, there are certain things that we must do to develop and strengthen our faith, and that is what we are getting ready to talk about now.

But, as we do, let me remind you again (at the risk of being tedious), all of our ability to do "these things" also comes from God. If we are depending upon our own strength and our ability to persevere, we will fail, and fail miserably. Only by the power of the Spirit of God can we succeed in doing the

things that will make us strong. Cf. Zech. 4:6b; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12, 13 ("Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more . . ."). Not only is there a lot of ignorance in our day about the grace of God, but there is a lot of ignorance about how it is that we live and grow as Christians. Peter evidently faced the same problem in his day, too, and so he felt that he had to say "these things" over and over again.

Now, as I said last Sunday, I am not going to be in a hurry to get through "these things." I am asking the Lord to help all of us to understand what "these things" mean, and that goes for me as well as for you. And so I am going to take some time to deal with each of these eight words. Let me mention them for you again. "These things" are:

- 1) Faith.
- 2) Virtue.
- 3) Knowledge.
- 4) Temperance.
- 5) Patience.
- 6) Godliness.
- 7) Brotherly kindness.
- 8) Love.

We start with "faith," and then add the rest of "these things" to strengthen our faith, and with the intention of abounding in each one.

I. FAITH (2 Pet. 1:1, 5).

How can we know that we have "faith," saving faith, the faith which gives us the right to claim that we are truly the children of God?

I think most of you know the name of Matthew Henry. His commentary on the whole Bible has been available throughout my entire life, and it is still available in six volumes. Matthew Henry was born in England back in 1662, and it is quite remarkable that his works have continued to be in such demand for the past 300 years.

When Matthew Henry was 11 years old he became concerned about this very question: Did he really know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour?

About this time (as I have said, when he was 11) he heard a sermon in which the minister stated that there were three main ways in which we could tell that we are saved (The Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry, pp. 5, 6 in the part on Matthew Henry's life). They were:

- 1) A true conversion--a change of heart and life, a change inwardly and outwardly. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.
- 2) True repentance for sin--which includes not only con-

- fession, but "grief, and shame, and sorrow, for it."
- 3) A true love for God--with all of the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. And that this love for God would be seen in two ways:
- a) A love for the people of God. Cf. 1 John 3:14.
 - b) A love for the Word of God. Cf. Psa. 119:97.

These are really the things that the Apostle John mentioned in 1 John which he wrote to those who believe so they could know that they had eternal life.

Now there is no point in going any farther until we make sure that we have "faith." Do you? Do I? Can we see these evidences in our lives. Are we different from what we used to be? Do we know that we are different in our hearts? Is our language different? Is our whole way of life different? Are we sorry that we have ever done anything to displease God? Do we love Him, His people, His Word? What about it? There is no more important question that you and I will ever have to answer. It is important that we know!

What do you believe about Jesus Christ, and what actually is your relationship with Him? If you have believed in Christ as your Saviour (and you cannot be saved without believing in Him), then note from John 1:11-13 that this is evidence that God did a work in your heart before you believed to enable you to believe. The change took place before you believe; you believed as evidence that your heart had been changed by the sovereign grace of God. That is what Peter called "the true grace of God" (1 Pet. 5:12).

It is important for us to know that we are saved, and God has made provision so that we can know it. Cf. Rom. 8:16.

But let us move on to the first thing that needs to be added.

II. VIRTUE (2 Pet. 1:5).

The Spirit of God had a reason for mentioned "these things" in the order that we have them here in verses 5-7. And it is very interesting that "virtue" should be mentioned first.

The word that Peter used here, ἀρετή, is used only three other times in the NT--and two of them are in Peter's Epistles: v. 3 in this chapter; 1 Pet. 2:9, where it is translated, "praises," and Phil. 4:8--the only time Paul used it, and the only time it is used outside of Peter's Epistles.

What does it mean?

There has been a lot of discussion about this in the commentaries to the effect that the meaning of this word has changed since the NT was written. And perhaps, in some respects, it has. But in other respects, it has not changed. It still is a word that has to do with ethics and morality--Biblical ethics and Biblical morality. It means that which is good in God's sight, that which is characterized by moral strength. It is a word that is related to holiness, to sanctification.

A person is changed when he becomes a Christian, but he must continue to change. He must add "virtue" to his life, and more "virtue," and more "virtue," and so on. And he will always need to be adding more and more "virtue" until at last he sees the Lord, and becomes like He is.

This past week there has been another very strange example in the headlines of our newspapers of what it means to be a Christian. It has to do with a certain young lady who has been mentioned in connection with one of the TV evangelists and an immoral relationship that they have had with each other. To add insult to injury she has more recently posed for a certain men's magazine. But that is not the worst. In this magazine she has been played up as being a born again Christian, and she herself has said that posing for that magazine has made her feel nearer to God!

That seems to be quite in contrast with a Bible story that I remember in which a man and a woman had sinned against God in another way, by eating fruit that God had told them not to eat. They lost their original glory, and realized that they were naked. And so they covered themselves with fig leaves. But when God came to them, they realized that their covering was not enough, and so they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden where they lived. They have taught us forever that you do not get near to God by immodesty, but by modesty. And actually the only covering that is sufficient to make it possible for us to get near to God is to be clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But this young woman's theology is very strange, isn't it? She would have us to think that the way you strengthen your faith is by taking off most of your clothes, and have someone take your picture to put in a magazine where anyone who wants to can look at it.

This is strange theology! Peter said, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." The god that this certain young lady was talking about certainly

was not the God of Adam and Eve, certainly not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If a person is truly born again, he will add to his faith "virtue," not disgrace herself, or himself, with actions that most non-Christians would look upon with disgust.

If you want to know what "virtue" is, go back to what Peter wrote in his first Epistle, in 1:15,

But as he which hath called you is holy,
so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

A virtuous Christian is one who is seeking to excel in that which is holy and good and right and strong in the sight of the Lord.

Let me take one more word:

III. KNOWLEDGE (2 Pet. 1:5).

The word that Peter used here is the word γνῶσις, a word which is used many times in the NT.

It is a word which speaks of the apprehension of the truth as compared with the word σοφία which includes the application of the truth. It speaks of understanding doctrine alone. It has to do with the knowledge of the Word.

But there is so much to learn in the Bible. Is there some part of that great store of knowledge that is the most important, that which Peter may have had in mind when he wrote this?

Yes, there is. And I believe that our context helps us. Note how Peter used the word "knowledge" in vv. 2 and 3. And, what is most conclusive of all, cf. 2 Pet. 3:18.

The knowledge that we need to be most concerned about, the knowledge that we need to add to our faith, and to add to our virtue, is the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! We need to continue to acquaint ourselves with Him, Who He is, and what He has done. And this is knowledge that we never will be able to exhaust! THE MORE WE KNOW OF HIM, THE HARDER IT WILL BE TO FOLLOW THE WORLD IN ITS SINS. It is when we stop learning of Him that we get into trouble, and we cease to flourish as the people of God.

Where do you learn about Him? There is only one place: in the Word of God. But it is easy to read the Word and not see Him unless you are concerned about adding virtue to your faith, and then adding the knowledge of Christ to that.

Concl: I am going to stop there for today. I have given you enough to work on for this week. Let me encourage you to make sure that you are in the faith, that you really do know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. And then I trust that you will examine your own life, even your attitudes, your thoughts, on this question of "virtue." And stop and think about how you are increasing in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed to us on the pages of Holy Scripture.

May we never be content with what we are, nor where we are spiritually. But let us keep pressing on "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

MORE OF "THESE THINGS"

2 Peter 1:6a

Intro: We have been considering in this chapter what Peter has called, "these things." They are the things which he mentioned in vv. 5-7. He was concerned about their faith-- that they might know that it was the true faith, and that their faith would be growing and strong. Faith is at the foundation of everything else for the Christian. Many think that they have faith, but they are deceived. The reality of our faith can be seen when we begin to add "these things" to it. "These things" cannot be mixed with a false faith. A false faith is of no more value than if we had no faith at all. But a false faith can be more dangerous because we are inclined to feel that everything is all right when it is not! And so Peter was speaking of a very important matter. And it is just as important for us today: (1) to establish the fact that we are true believers, and (2) to keep us growing in our relationship with our Lord if our faith is genuine.

In addition to the results that will be experienced in our lives if we are adding "these things" to our faith, Peter expressed his own conviction regarding their importance by what he wrote in vv. 12-15. (Read.) Therefore, you and I should be keenly interested in knowing exactly what Peter had in mind because they have to be of the greatest important to us, too!

Last Sunday we considered faith and virtue and knowledge.

I encouraged you to make sure that your faith is a true faith-- that you are really trusting in Christ as what He did on the Cross as your hope for being in heaven some day. I gave you three tests which Matthew Henry suggested from a sermon he heard as an eleven year old boy. Let me remind you of them again:

- 1) Your life has been changed.
- 2) You are repentant in your heart for your sins. You not only acknowledge that you are a sinner, but you have feelings of grief and shame and sorrow for your sins. You wish that you had never sinned against God.
- 3) You have a true love for God in your heart which includes a love for His Word and a love for His people.

I hope that you have applied those tests to yourself, and that, if you have not already done so, you will do it now.

If our faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, it needs to grow; it cannot, it must not, remain the same. And so we add "virtue" to it.

To add "virtue" means that we set our hearts on those moral perfections that we can see in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ. "Virtue" is an old word for morality, and that is

what it means here--the moral character of God Himself, His holiness. There is power in such a life. Power begins with what we are! And that power is traceable to what we received when the Lord saved us. (See v. 3.)

So all of this adds to what I said a moment ago about a Christian being a changed person. And the changes must continue as we seek to appropriate, by the grace of God, more of the holiness that is to be found in God alone.

In addition, we are to "add to" our "faith . . . knowledge."

Faith and the Word of God are inseparable. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes through the Word. The more we feed our souls upon the Word, that is, the greater insight we have into the Word, the more we understand it, the greater our faith will be. And so it is the knowledge of the Word that Peter had in mind here, WITH ONE PARTICULAR THING IN MIND: from the opening verses of this chapter we can tell that he was speaking primarily about the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! And this is not merely a doctrinal knowledge, but a personal acquaintance with the Lord in daily fellowship. We are to know Him as we would claim to know a very dear personal friend.

I hope we all have these truths well in mind. And remember that you do not add "these things" once, and then forget about them, but you continue to "add" them.

Now we are ready for the fourth word:

I. TEMPERANCE (2 Pet. 1:6).

"Temperance" is self-control. It means that a person has himself under control. He is a master of himself. He is disciplined, and it has reference to those things which a person might do who is not self-controlled.

This word is found only two other times in the NT.

In Acts 24:25 Luke tells us that it was a part of the Gospel message which Paul preached to Felix. He reasoned with Felix about "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Obviously Felix, like all unregenerate people, was not in control of his sins. Rather, his sins controlled him.

Gal. 5:23 tells us that "temperance" is a part of "the fruit of the Spirit." The kind of self-control that Peter was referring to can only be ours by the Holy Spirit. It is not self-produced; it is divinely imparted as it is needed.

A Christian has to deal with his sins. His sins may be forgiven, but they continue to exercise great power in his life. And if he is to live triumphantly where once he was in bondage, he must be adding "temperance," self-control, to his faith every day that he lives.

This brings up the whole subject of mortifying the flesh. Please turn to Col. 3:5-17.

The Lord does not take our "flesh," our old nature away, when we are saved. But through the Spirit and upon the basis of the work of Christ on the Cross, He does give us the power to live in victory over those sins which mastered us before we were saved.

You and I need to be learning more and more about this.

You see, salvation does not set us free to sin, but salvation sets us free from sin. A true Christian will be very concerned about his sins, and how he can keep from doing those things that displease the Lord.

This brings up a subject which is very prominent today.

It is one of the outstanding characteristics of the human heart that we do not want anybody else telling us what we can or cannot do, or what we can or cannot have. In society we see how people fight the possibility that somebody else will tell them what they can do, or what they can have. There are people who do not believe it is right for the State to tell us to wear seat belts, or that we can only go 65 miles an hour.

It seems like we are going from one major strike in our country to another one. People are looking out for #1.

And the question of our rights has gotten out of hand. Every group is ready to protest that their rights are being violated. And that often leads to violence. I am sure that those who framed our Constitution did not have in mind what we are experiencing today, and which was expressed by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address when he said that "government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth." When we have every group demanding their rights we are heading straight into anarchy. This is what sin in our hearts causes us to do. Even in the past it seems that our country has given very little attention to what pleases the Lord; we want what we want, and woe to the person who stands in our way.

The Christian is one who sees the value of restraint. He

knows that, if he is left to himself, he will make all of the wrong decisions. He knows how deceitful his heart can be--more so than anything else. Cf. Jer. 17:9. The sinful heart demands its rights; the Christian is concerned about the will of God, and glorifying Him. May the Lord enable us to see how much we need to have "temperance," to be self-controlled by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What is our next word?

II. PATIENCE (2 Pet. 1:6).

This word, of course, is used many times in the NT. This is the only time that Peter used the word, but what importance he placed on it.

Patience is linked to faith in 2 Thess. 1:4 where Paul said, "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." When Paul was telling Timothy to follow after various things, he mentioned "faith, love, patience" (2 Tim. 3:10). Paul told Titus that "the aged men be sober, grave, temperate (our previous word), sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (Tit. 2:2). In Heb. 6:12 we are told that we are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And then in Heb. 12:1, 2 we are exhorted to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." James said that "the trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jas. 1:3). Our Lord told the church at Thyatira, "I know thy . . . faith, and thy patience" (Rev. 2:19).

So it is clear that faith and patience are companions. Where you find one, you will always find the other.

What does patience mean?

We all know that it is related to waiting, and perhaps waiting in faith, in hope, with expectation. But there are two prominent ideas in the word which we may not have in mind when we talk about waiting.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones was actually commenting on "virtue" when he said what I want to pass on to you now, but the same would apply to "patience." He said,

I wonder sometimes whether we are not dealing here with something which keeps large number of people from the Christian life and faith. Is there not something languid, so often, in our Christian life and Christian activity, as you contrast it with the life of the

world outside? Is there not this curious tendency for the element of passivity in our conception of the Christian faith to dominate, as if we regard faith as nothing but an attitude of waiting? A kind of lethargy and languor spreads over us, a curious kind of lassitude (2 Peter, pp. 26, 27).

This is not what faith is, and this is not what patience is. Patience is literally a remaining under, an enduring of a difficult trial or task, but it also indicates that we persevere in doing what we need to do. We do not give up; we do not quit! These are the two main ideas in the word "patience."

We are naturally impatient. We naturally want to quit or to change when the going gets rough. But it is so important that we add patience to our faith. This word pre-supposes testings, trials, tribulations, trouble. That is what we have in this world. But trials are always to teach us to wait with expectation and hope, and to persevere as we wait, believing that God will give us grace to endure whatever it might be, or that He will lift us out.

When Moses continued to go to Pharaoh even though Pharaoh continue to turn him down, Moses was adding to his faith, patience. When Joseph continued to do his work well even after he was cast into prison, he was adding to his faith, patience. When Jeremiah continued to preach even though his life had been threatened, he was adding to his faith, patience. When Daniel continued to call upon the Lord even though he knew that it meant the lions' den, he was adding to his faith, patience. When Paul wrote such triumphant letters from his Roman prison, he was adding to his faith, patience. When John was on the isle of Patmos, he was adding to his faith, patience.

Many, many more illustrations could be given of saints in all ages who strengthened their faith by adding patience to what they already had.

Is that what we are learning in our trials? Do we continue to trust the Lord, persevering in whatever the Lord has given us to do, and finding added strength even though the testing may continue on with no end in sight?

Concl: This is far as I am going today--just these two words: temperance, and patience. The Lord willing, I hope to take up the final three next Lord's Day.

But let me conclude by asking you if you have noticed on characteristic that all of "these things" have in common, and that are especially prominent in the two words we have been

considering today. They are inner qualities--all of them. They all will be manifested outwardly, but their source is in our hearts. That goes for faith, for virtue, for knowledge, for temperance, for patience, and for all of the rest! You see, the important thing that God is doing for each one of us is what He is doing in our hearts. He works where only He and we know what is going on. You cannot see what He is doing in my heart, and I cannot see what He is doing in your heart--except as changes may become apparent in the way we live.

Now the Lord does not want us to be hypocrites. A hypocrite is one who tries to act like more is going on in his heart than is really going on. But the Lord not only sees our outward behavior; He knows what we are really like. And it is in those times of testing that come to all of us that it becomes apparent to all what we really are. May the Lord enable us to add to our faith, virtue, and to our virtue, knowledge, and to our knowledge, temperance, and to our temperance, patience. And may they not only be in us, but may they abound in us to the glory and praise of God.

THE FINAL THREE OF "THESE THINGS"

2 Peter 1:6, 7

Intro: For the past two weeks we have been seeking to understand the words which Peter used in vv. 5, 6 of 2 Peter 1. There are eight of them in all. Today we come to the last three.

Peter was writing about adding to our faith, or things with which our faith needs to be supplied. "Faith" is the foundation of everything in our lives as Christians. If we do not have faith, we have nothing. Faith itself is a gift from God. We are saved by faith, that is, we place our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in what He did for sinners when He died on the Cross. But our life as Christians not only begin by faith, but it continues on by faith. And so we are always concerned about our faith--about trusting the Lord, about believing His promises. Paul wrote in Romans 14:23 that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "without faith it is impossible to please him (God): for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And 2 Corinthians 5:7 says that "we walk by faith, not by sight." So we live by faith, and we die by faith. Our life here on earth is a life of faith. So our faith is very, very important. It needs to be strengthened. And we strengthen it by adding to it, as Peter wrote in our text, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Of course all of these have to do with the Word of God, and they have to do with what we have received in our Lord Jesus Christ. See verses 2, 3, and 4.

"Virtue" has to do with the moral excellence of our faith, with those qualities that we see in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ. "Knowledge" has to do with the knowledge of God and of Christ, knowledge that is found in the Word of God. "Temperance" is self-control, and it shows the necessity of restraining ourselves with respect to sin. "Patience" indicates circumstances that try us. These, of course, are tribulations, sufferings, which come to all who seek to live for the Lord in this ungodly world.

Now we are ready for "godliness . . . brotherly kindness . . . charity," or love.

Before we consider these, let me show how they are related to each other.

"Godliness," as the word indicates, has to do with our relationship with God. "Brotherly kindness" could be translated, brotherly love. It has to do with our relationship to each other as Christians, as the people of God. And lastly, Peter

used the word "charity," or love, in this particular instance to refer to our relationship to the world.

So we are going to be considering our relationship to God, to each other in the body of Christ, and to the world outside of the Church.

I. GODLINESS (2 Pet. 1:6b, 7a).

This word signifies what we mean when we talk about fearing the Lord. We do not fear the Lord in the sense that we are always afraid of what He might do to us, but to fear the Lord means that we want to please Him, that we want to show proper reverence for Him. We want to worship Him as the One Who is worthy of our worship. To state it another way, it is piety toward God.

In one word it sums up what our relationship with God ought to be. See it in 2 Pet. 1:3 and 3:11. A related word is used in 2:9.

This word is most prominent in the Pastoral Epistles of the New Testament:

- 1) 1 Tim. 2:2; 4:7, 8; 5:4 (which may not apply here); 6:3, 5, 6, 11.
- 2) 2 Tim. 3:5, 12.
- 3) Titus 1:1; 2:12.

The only other book in which it is used in the NT is the Book of Acts (3:12; 10:2, 7; 22:12).

But this does not tell us how to "add . . . godliness" to our faith. How do we do that?

In my study I came across ten suggestions that were made by John Brown, a Scotch preacher who was born back in 1780. (I have mentioned him before.) There is some overlapping in these suggestions, but I believe they are well worth your taking them down so that you can think about them and profit from them in the coming days.

He said that, if we are to add godliness to our faith, we must do the following things:

- 1) We must get to know God.
- 2) We must learn to trust God.
- 3) We must worship God, and submit ourselves to Him.
- 4) We must find our happiness in Him, learning what it means to be always rejoicing in the Lord.
- 5) We must seek to be conformed in our character and our behavior to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 6) We must faithfully maintain our fellowship with God.
- 7) We must seek to be approved by God in all that we are and do.

- 8) We must be habitually thinking about God.
- 9) We must be most concerned at all times about glorifying God.
- 10) We must learn to look on everything in its connection with God.

As I said, you can see some overlapping in what Mr. Brown wrote many years ago, but each one of these ten points is well worth our consideration separately. And let me give you an assignment. I could do this for you, but it will be so much more profitable for you if you do it for yourself. It is this: Find as many Scriptures as you are able to find to go with each of those ten points. I have no doubt, but that you will find plenty of scriptural support for each of them. And, after all, that is what we are most concerned about--not what Mr. Brown said, but what the Scriptures say. If his points are supported by Scripture, then we can be most thankful to the Lord for what He taught Mr. Brown about 150 years ago.

So, when Peter said, "add to your faith . . . godliness," he was saying a lot. And it is very important that we do what he said for us to do because the Holy Spirit is the One Who directed him to write these words.

II. BROTHERLY KINDNESS (2 Pet. 1:7a).

If we were to take the Greek letters of this word and transliterate them into English, we would have the word, philadelphian. It would have been better if our translators had rendered it, brotherly love.

Peter was not speaking of the love that members of a human family should have for each other, but he was thinking about the love that we have for each other as members of God's family.

We had this word in 1 Pet. 1:22. A related word is in 1 Pet. 3:8.

It is also used in three other NT books:

- 1) Rom. 12:10a -- "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."
- 2) 1 Thess. 4:9 -- "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."
- 3) Heb. 13:1 -- "Let brotherly love continue."

The Apostle John wrote what we have in 1 John 3:14 and 5:1, 2 which reads,
Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born

of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

So there is no question about what our attitude to each other should be. It should not only be that we love each other, but that we love each other "fervently." And for this, as Paul told the Thessalonians, we are all "taught of God."

Our faith is strengthened when we love each other. But how tragic it is to see the trouble that exists among the people of God!

III. CHARITY, or LOVE (2 Pet. 1:7).

Not only is our faith strengthened by a right relationship with God, and a right relationship with our fellow-believers in Christ, but it is strengthened by a right attitude toward the world.

When John wrote that we are not to love the world (1 John 2:15-17), he was not referring to the people of the world, but to the world as an evil system. We are to love the people of the world, and here Peter used the familiar NT word, ἀγάπη. What does it mean here?

It means that we are to be kindly disposed toward the world, to seek the blessing of God upon the world, to wish the world well.

How do we show our love for the people of the world? Is it by taking over all of the social problems of our city or state? Well, there may be times when we can help those who are in need, and we ought to do it. But the church is not a welfare organization. We certainly cannot condone the sins of the world, or take part in them. Paul warned us against that in Rom. 12:1, 2.

Here is our answer: We are to seek the blessing of God upon the world through the preaching of the Gospel to the people of the world as we have been commissioned to do. There is no one else who is going to do this. The government seeks to stay away from anything like this. Even many social organizations that once preached the Gospel no longer are concerned about that. They are concerned exclusively with meeting present physical and material and emotional needs. Even churches who have gone the social route have left the Gospel behind. The way we love the world, and the way we can see lives changed so that their hearts are filled with peace because they have peace with

God, is by proclaiming to them the Gospel message--that Christ came, that He died for sinners, that He arose from the dead, has gone back to heaven, and some day is coming to take all who have received Him to be with Him in heaven for all eternity.

When people say to us, "Have a good day," do we tell them how our days can be good? We do not mean that they will be free from problems, but we do mean that we can have peace in our hearts with God. If someone say, "The Lord bless you," do we tell them how He has blessed us with salvation, and that He will bless them in the same way if they repent of their sins and turn in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we have the message of salvation, and do not tell it to the people of the world, there is no way that we can claim to love them. And all of us stand condemned by that statement. Let us pray that the Lord will fill our hearts, first of all, with such a love for Himself, and then for each other, that we will be overflowing with love for a needy world, and that we will eagerly tell others about the Saviour Who has done so much for us, and Who means so much to us.

Concl: There you have the eight words which Peter has called, "these things." It all starts with faith in Christ, and then, out of what we already have in Christ, we "add" the others, AND KEEP ON ADDING FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.

Now let me conclude by saying what our Lord said on one occasion after He had been teaching them. It could be said after every sermon. It could be said after every chapter that we read in the Bible. Here they are: "IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS, HAPPY ARE YE IF YE DO THEM" (John 13:17).

It is wonderful to hear the Word of God. But it is even more wonderful if we hear and obey the Word of God. May the Lord make each of us doers of the Word, and not hearers only that His Name may be glorified, that we as His people might enjoy the fellowship that is ours in Christ, and that the world may know what it means that we love them.

ABOUNDING IN LIFE TOWARD HEAVEN

2 Peter 1:8-11

Intro: My text for our consideration today is verses 8 through 11 in 2 Peter 1.

For the past three Sundays we have been considering the eight words which are found in verses 7, 8, and 9. Peter referred to them as "these things," and explained in our text for today why he was so concerned about them. We have seen each Sunday from verses 12 through 16 that Peter did not apologize for repeating "these things." In fact, in view of the imminence of his own departure to heaven, he said that he would have more to say about them, and that he would be teaching them, and encouraging the people to be busy in doing them, until he died. And he was writing them down so that after he was in heaven they would still be able to read about them. One thing is very clear: he did not want them to forget "these things." But that was not all! He wanted them to be diligent in doing them.

Now I have been seeking to emphasize with you that, if "these things" were that important to the Apostle Peter, they ought to be just as important to us. The more we understand those eight words which make up "these things," the more we will realize that they make up the whole of Christian living. And so I encourage you to keep thinking about them. Read whatever you can find about them, providing what you are reading was written by men who knew the Lord, and who realized how extremely important they are.

But we are ready to go on now to verse 8. What was Peter doing in verses 8 through 11?

It seems to me that he was seeking to show why "these things" are so important. There is great value in doing them, great loss in neglecting them. And I have reference to loss as far as this life is concerned as well as loss as far as life after death is concerned.

Let me divide these verses into three divisions:

- 1) The importance of "these things" (verses 8 and 9).
- 2) The exhortation concerning "these things" (verse 10)--with a promise to be added to the promise already given in verse 8.
- 3) The goal we need to have in mind (verse 11).

Actually we could use the word importance for all three points which I have given you, but Peter brought out their importance in different ways. To say the least, "these things" are more important than most of us realize, and they will result in the greatest of blessings here and hereafter.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF "THESE THINGS" (2 Pet. 1:8, 9).

You can see immediately that there is a contrast between these two verses. Verse 8 refers to the person who is diligently adding "these things" to his faith. Verse 9 speaks of the person who is lacking in them.

A. Concerning those who have "these things" in them (verse 8).

Each one of these verses is very interesting, and all of them are sure to throw new light upon our lives as Christians.

To have "these things . . . in you" means that you are adding them to your faith. There is evidence in your life of virtue, knowledge, etc. But to have them abounding means that there is evidence that you are growing in each of these characteristics. Your life is not stagnant. You do not act like you know everything that you need to know, or that you have arrived spiritually and can grow no more, but your life is one in which you are giving daily attention to the "things" that Peter has mentioned here. What we want to avoid is being "barren" and "unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A "barren" Christian is like an unplowed field. He is saved, but he is like a farm where there is no activity. Nothing is being planted. No harvest can be expected because the ground has not been cultivated and no seed has been sown. A "barren" Christian is an idle Christian.

But look at the last part of this eighth verse. Note how Peter spoke of the area in which a Christian will be "unfruitful." It is "in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." That is interesting, isn't it? We usually think of fruit in connection with the results, the good results, of what we are able to do. But here Peter linked it with what we know, and, in particular with what we know about the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to take this statement back to verses 2 and 3 of this chapter. Let us remind ourselves of what the Apostle Peter had to say in those verses about "knowledge," about the knowledge of God and of Christ. Verse 2 has to do with our daily need for "grace and peace." Verse 3 has to do with the appropriation of "all things" which we need for "life and godliness." So that includes everything that has to do with our lives as Christians--absolutely everything! It is all

ours in direct proportion to our knowledge of God and of Christ, and we can never get what we need except through our knowledge of Them and our fellowship with them. Christians lack "grace" and "peace" and "joy" and all of the graces that they need because they do not know God as they should, nor do they know the Lord Jesus Christ as they should.

But what else does this tell me about "these things" in verse 7, 8, and 9? It tells me that the more I am occupied with "these things," the more I am going to be learning about God and about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, to know the Lord better, and to find all of my joy and satisfaction in Him! That should be the cry of all of our hearts. And there is nothing more important that we have to do in this life. If other things have priority in your life or mind, we need to change, and to change in a hurry.

B. Concerning those who lack "these things" (v. 9).

Peter had been writing about those who had "these things" in them. Now he refers to those in whom, lit., these things are not present.

What can we say about this type of a person? Three things:

1. He is "blind."

This verse presents us with a problem: was Peter speaking of a Christian who has no evidence of salvation, and who eventually will be lost again? Or was he speaking of a professing Christian who really was not saved at all?

I am inclined to think that he was speaking of the latter--a professing Christ, one who was in the church, so to speak, but who did not have the evidences of salvation in his heart and in his life.

In the first place, it is not possible for a person to be saved and not have some evidence of salvation. If he is saved, he is a new creature. If he is not changed, he obviously has not been saved.

In the second place, we know that a person cannot lose his salvation. It is possible for one who is merely a professing Christian to fall away. We

see that happening, unfortunately, all of the time. But I will say more about this when I get to the last statement of this ninth verse.

A "blind" person has no spiritual discernment. The truth of God means nothing to him. He can sit and listen to an explanation of "these things" and sees no reason at all to get interested in them or excited about them. He is spiritually "blind."

2. He "cannot see afar off." He is near-sighted.

How can a person be "blind" and be near-sighted at the same time? He is blind toward the things of God, but he can see the things at hand, the things that have to do with this world, and only this life. He may be very brilliant in worldly matters, but unable to see the things of God.

3. He has "forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

This statement gives us our problem. If his sins were "purged," then he must be saved. But, as I said before, it is impossible to get salvation and then lose it. That is contrary to Scripture. What, then, does this mean?

Can a true believer forget that he was cleansed from his sins? That seems impossible, doesn't it? What I think Peter had in mind was the kind of a person who professes faith in Christ, his life is changed, he does forsake some of his sins. Perhaps this is a gracious act on the part of God. He claims to have his sins forgiven, but over the passage of time, he forgets that. He has no real interest in the things of God. And he is far too busy with the things of this life to devote his time and interest to "these things," the things of God and of Christ.

In view of the exhortation which follows, this is to me the best interpretation of the verse. In other words, if you want to know if you are really saved, look for the evidence of "these things in your life. More about that as we go on to . . .

II. THE EXHORTATION CONCERNING "THESE THINGS" (2 Pet. 1:10).

You can see what I mean by what I have just said. The "wherefore" of this verse ties it in with the ninth verse. The exhortation is this: Wherefore the rather, brethren,

give diligence to make your calling and election sure."
 HOW NATURALLY HE SPOKE OF THE BELIEVER'S "CALLING AND ELECTION" TO SALVATION!
 PETER BELIEVED IN BOTH. WE COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT BE SAVED W/O THEM.

This means, put forth every effort to assure yourself that you have really been called and chosen by God for salvation. Make sure that your profession of faith is genuine, valid, and that you are not deceiving yourself about being a Christian.

How do you do that? Is your assurance based upon the time you remember when you went forward in a meeting, or when somebody was talking to you and you prayed to accept the Lord. No, the Scriptures never tell us anything like that. YOU MAKE "YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE" BY THE WAY IN WHICH YOU ARE DILIGENTLY SEEKING TO ADD "THESE THINGS" TO YOUR FAITH. Assurance is not based upon your feelings unless you can see evidence in your life that you have been changed. You want to go to church because you want to learn more about the Lord. You want to read the Bible because you want to learn more about the Lord. You want to be with the Lord's people because you are in their family, the family of God. You want to pray because you have learned how much you need the Lord.

What a tragedy (there is none greater) for a person to live his life and die thinking that he is a Christian when he is not! Now can you see more clearly why Peter was so concerned about "these things." He wanted people who only professed to be Christians to have their eyes opened so that they would see that they needed Christ. And he wanted Christians who were like an unplowed field to get busy about the things of God.

Verse 10 closes with a promise: "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." By this he does not mean fall out of salvation. You can't do that. He means that you will no longer be living that life where you are continually failing the Lord by the things that you do because you do not trust Him as you should. Your faith will be strengthened by "these things," and your assurance will be unshakeable.

Isn't it interesting that even when a true Christian begins to neglect the things of the Lord, sooner or later he begins to doubt his salvation?

But we have one more verse.

III. THE GOAL WE NEED TO HAVE IN MIND (2 Pet. 1:11).

This is another promise, isn't it? We had one in verse 8; another in verse 10; and now this one.

Here Peter was speaking of the prospect that was immediately before himself. He was talking about going to heaven. But he was not only talking about that, but he was thinking about what kind of an entrance we will make "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

You and I are going to reach that "everlasting kingdom" either by death, or when the Lord comes--we do not and cannot know which it will be. But what kind of an entrance will we have?

Let me give you some verses to think about in contrast with this verse. The Apostle John wrote,
 And now, little children, abide in him;
 that, when he shall appear,
 we have confidence,
 and not be ashamed before him at his coming
 (1 John 2:28).

Paul wrote these words:

If any man's work shall be burned,
 he shall suffer loss:
 but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire
 (1 Cor. 3:15).

Do you want to be saved like that? That would not mean an abundant entrance into glory!

You know, sometimes the Lord takes people home because their lives are so worthless here. We don't want that to happen to us. How different it would be to have the Lord say this to us,

Well done, thou good and faithful servant:
 thou hast been faithful over a few things,
 I will make thee ruler over many things:
 enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Mt. 25:21).

Concl: Can I ask you a question (and I ask myself as well)?

Are the saints and angels in heaven going to be glad to see you when you get to heaven. You see, it is not the great preachers who are necessarily going to get the great welcome. It will be those who have looked at things afar off, and have devoted their lives to "these things," learning about the Lord, becoming like Him, and consequently used of God as a means of blessing to others as the Lord has seen fit.

We have all had a good illustration of an abundant entrance this past week by what has taken place in Midland, Texas. Who will ever forget that scene when after more than 58 hours they brought that precious little Jessica McClure to the surface. The whole world had notice what was going on, and people were praying that the men who were seeking to rescue her would be successful. And finally they brought her up. There were

shouts, there were tears! What rejoicing! No one really knew what condition she was in, but the main thing was that she was alive and safe.

Could that not be a picture of us? All heaven is concerned about our coming. They probably have more interest in what is going on in our lives than we can possibly realize. Will there be shouts of joy when we arrive? This is not foolish pride. This is what the Lord has set before us in His Word. This is what we are promised in the Word of God IF we diligently devote ourselves day after day to those "things" that Peter knew was so important.

Let us be diligent in our lives, earnestly occupied with "these things" that we have been learning about, so that we will have an abundant entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

A ZEALOUS PASTOR

2 Peter 1:12-15

Intro: It would be impossible for me, or for anyone else to overstate the importance of the first eleven verses of this chapter. The Apostle Peter has given us the heart of the truth of God in those verses. I have averaged about one and one-third verses a Sunday since we started considering this Epistle, but I feel that I could go back over it all for the next eight Sundays without wasting your time or mine. These are verses that we need to come back to again and again. In fact, this whole Epistle, as short as it is, is of major importance to all of us.

I hope you have memorized those eleven verses, that you will repeat them frequently to each other, and that those of you who have children will make it your job to see that your children know these verses, too.

Today I want to consider with you verses 12 through 15.

When we read them over, there does not seem to be anything very difficult about them. Perhaps you are thinking that they surely are not important to give a whole Sunday's service to them. If that is the way you feel, I hope to be able to change your mind about them.

In Philemon 9 Paul referred to himself as "Paul the aged." We might refer to Peter in this Epistle in the same way, as Peter the aged. As I have said repeatedly, this was his last Epistle. He had received his summons from the Lord. He knew that his time was short. Tradition tells us that Peter was martyred.

Our Lord said to Peter in John 21:18, 19a,
 Verily, verily, I say unto thee,
 When thou wast young, thou girdest 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.

So Peter knew from the earliest days of his ministry that his life would be cut short by martyrdom. But this was not to discourage him. Rather it was to make him more zealous because after the Lord said these words to Peter, He said, "Follow me" (John 21:19b).

All of these circumstances make the four words of my text for this service extremely important. His ministry was coming to an end, and he knew it. The Lord had revealed it to him in

way. And so this gives special significance to this Epistle because these are Peter's last words. He knew that they were his last words. Therefore, they are very important--all of them--but the words of our text are especially important because they not only tell us that Peter's ministry was coming to a close, but they give to us Peter's understanding of what the ministry is from the standpoint of one who had been in the battle for a long time.

If we were to gather together all of the passages of the Bible that have to do with what we now call, pastoral theology, we could not afford to ignore these four verses. This is Peter's advice to every man in the ministry as to how the work of the pastor should be carried out. It is important for every Christian to understand these verses so he will know what to expect from his church.

Before I get into the details of these verses, let me point out one thing which permeates the whole passage. It is this: Peter kept himself in a constant state of readiness. This is the meaning of, "I will not be negligent." In some MSS this is stated positively: I will always be ready, or I will always be sure "to put you in remembrance of these things." Their meaning is very similar to what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season . . ." The servant of the Lord may get weary in his work, but he is never to be weary of his work. He is always like a soldier on active duty, ready, grateful for every opportunity to minister the Word of God to the people of God.

You can see how this state of readiness, of eagerness, runs through these four verses. The word "wherefore" at the beginning of verse 12 indicates that the importance of what he had been writing about in the first eleven verses made him feel as he did about his ministry.

And so this leads me to my first point:

I. THE NATURE OF THE MINISTRY.

After all of the years that Peter had been in the service of the Lord, what was his understanding of the work that the Lord had given him to do?

It seems from what we have here in the text that there are four answers to that question.

A. To teach.

Peter was firmly convinced that the truth he had just uttered was indeed the very truth of God, and it was his solemn resolve to spend the rest of his life doing

what he had been doing all through his ministry:
teaching the people of God.

B. To repeat.

Read those verses over again, and you will see that this is the point of what Peter was saying here.

In v. 12 we see that he did not hesitate to go over the truth even with those who knew it the best and who were the most mature in their faith. One of our great failings is that we so easily forget the things that we need always to remember. So, if the mature need it, the immature need it also. We must never apologize for going over truths which we have taught before.

C. To arouse.

Notice the expression in v. 13, "to stir you up." This means, to awaken you, or to keep you awake so that you will not go to sleep.

Perhaps Peter was remembering how disastrous it had been for him to sleep in the Garden of Gethsemane when he should have been awake, doing what the Lord had told him and James and John to do.

The Church of Jesus Christ in our day needs constantly to be aroused!

D. To write.

See v. 15. How much we would lose if we did not have the writings of godly men and women who lived in days gone by. Think of the loss it would be to us if we did not have the written Word of God. It is good for all of us to put things down that are important to us, things that we want our families, our fellow-Christians, to remember.

Peter did all of these things, and so should I, and so should you.

II. THE BASIC NEEDS OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

What I am about to say follows point by point from what I have just said about THE NATURE OF THE MINISTRY.

A. The people of God need to be taught from the Word of God things that they do not know.

We do not come to church to be entertained; we come to learn. We come together to study the Word of God.

- B. The people of God needed to be reminded of truth they already have been taught, truth that they already know.

Never turn your mind off just because you are hearing familiar truth. If you are hearing something you have heard before, it is because you need to hear it. Even the Holy Spirit has been given to us to remind us of the truth. See John 14:26:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
he shall teach you all things,
and bring all things to your remembrance,
whatsoever I have said unto you.

- C. The people of God need to be aroused, awakened, kept awake.

This ought always to be a major reason why we come to church. Living in the world makes us spiritually dull. It tends to lull us into spiritual lethargy. We need to be aroused. The Word of God will have this effect upon us.

- D. Let me emphasize this fourth point: THE PEOPLE OF GOD NEED TO READ.

You need to read your Bible; you need to read the works of godly men and women. If you are not a reader, and yet you are a Christian, you are more than likely going to remain in a state of spiritual infancy. There may be exceptions, but the person who does not read will have to benefit from getting others to read to him (or her).

Why do we have the Word of God in written form? The Lord's people did not always have what we have today. The Word was written because we are to read it. Read it for yourself. Read it to others. Let others read it to you. READ, READ, READ!

But now let me take up a final point:

III. THE MORTALITY OF THE PASTOR.

Peter lived in a "tabernacle," a tent. It is a temporary dwelling. His body was not permanent. As Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:1-4, the day will come when this tabernacle will be "dissolved." Peter called it "my decease," lit., his

exodus. The time would come when he would die. His soul would be separated from his body, and he would be with the Lord.

We do not know when this time will come. Peter knew that it was imminent. The Lord had told him so. Consequently, he felt an unusual constraint upon his heart to work as diligently and faithfully and zealously as he could because he knew that his days were numbered.

Not only that, but he sought to work so that his work would continue after he was gone.

As I sit at my desk and look at the books in my library, I see books by Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, John Calvin, John Owen, Arthur Pink, Thomas Manton, John Flavel, Thomas Brooks, G. Campbell Morgan, William Gurnall, George Whitefield, John Newton, Matthew Henry, Matthew Poole, and many others. But do you know what they now have in common? Their earthly tabernacles have been dissolved. They have all had their exodus from this life. Their books are here, but they are gone.

I pick up my Bible and am confronted with the same fact. Everybody mentioned in our Bible is gone: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Peter, James, John, Paul, and on and on.

They are all like David about whom Paul said in Acts 13:36,

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption. The Lord's servants die, but the work continues.

The same is true for us. Pastors die, too. No one has ever been able to continue on indefinitely. None of us knows when our time will come. It can come very suddenly. But we need to feel that same urgency about serving the Lord that Peter felt when he knew that his days on earth were coming to an end. Today is all that we can be sure of, and we are not absolutely sure that we will have all of it. Therefore, we need to be zealous, untiring in the work of the Lord. And while we have breath we are to teach the people of God, remind them of what they have known, and stir them up to stay awake in a day and generation when there are so many things to anesthetize us and put us to sleep as far as the things of the Lord are concerned.

Concl: Let us serve our generation well, and thus be ready when the Lord calls us home.

THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

2 Peter 1:16-18

Intro: Especially after reading verses 12 through 15 we feel compelled to ask, Why was Peter so concerned about these truths, which he called "these things," that he wanted to spend the rest of his life talking about them, and even wanted them to be remembered after his exodus from this life?

A part of the answer to that question can be seen in verses 8 through 11, and the tremendous promises that they contain. But what is the reason behind those reasons?

There are two parts to that answer, and those two parts are inseparably woven together. We cannot consider one without considering the other. But I am going to take just one of them this morning, and then take the other one next Sunday morning, the Lord willing.

THE FIRST ANSWER HAS TO DO WITH HIS PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. This is what we have in verses 16 through 18, our text for today. THE SECOND ANSWER HAS TO DO WITH THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD, AND HOW WE GOT IT. That was Peter's subject in verses 19 through 21.

In giving the first answer, notice that Peter used the first person personal pronoun "we" four times in verses 16-18, and it is implied a fifth time:

- 1) "We have not followed . . ." (v. 16).
- 2) "We made known unto you . . ." (v. 16).
- 3) Implied: "But (we) were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (v. 16).
- 4) "And this voice which came from heaven we heard" (v. 18).
- 5) "When we were with him in the holy mount" (v. 18).

Peter was not speaking, as we would say, "editorially," but he was referring to himself, to James, and John. They were all with the Lord in the Mount of Transfiguration. What one saw, they all saw. What one heard, they all heard. And so we have a strong testimony here that has the support of what our Lord said in Matt. 18:16, referring to Deut. 19:15, that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

These were fantastic claims that Peter was making, fantastic from the human point-of-view, but they are supported by the strongest possible evidence. In addition to Peter and James and John, we have the testimony of Matthew who included it in his Gospel although he was not with them in the Mount, and the testimonies of Mark and Luke, both of whom included the account of the transfiguration in their Gospels, and neither of them was there. And John, who was there, did not report the transfiguration, but he did have this to say in John 1:14,

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
 (and we beheld his glory,
 the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)
 full of grace and truth.

So what was Peter doing in these last six verses of 2 Peter 1? He was complying with what he had told all believers to do in 1 Peter 3:15,

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:
 and be ready always to give an answer to every man
 that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you
 with meekness and fear.

And this is the reason I have entitled my message this morning, THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE. Next Sunday my subject will be, THE RECORD OF OUR HOPE.

Remember that the word "hope" in the Bible really has to do with our prospect for the future. We are Christians claim to be on our way to heaven. More than that we believe that Jesus Christ is coming back for us, and that He will come later to reign upon the earth. We not only expect to be "with the Lord" some day, but we expect to be "like Him." Now these are tremendous, fantastic, unbelievable claims--IF we are looking at them from a human point-of-view. Many people do not think that we have any right to make such claims. What is our reason for believing that we can make these claims? The answer can be given in just four words. THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE IS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! That is one simple statement is what Peter was saying in these three verses. We have a hope with Christ; we have nothing without Christ--AND NEITHER DOES ANYONE ELSE!

Peter had no doubt at all but that the things that he had written, the things that he had taught and preached, the things that he believed, were beyond all question THE TRUTH OF GOD.

And so let us note, first of all,

I. THE CERTAINTY OF PETER'S FAITH (1 Pet. 1:16, 18).

Peter absolutely denied that what he had preached was just "cunningly devised fables." That is, the three Apostles had not gotten together and skillfully worked out all that they were teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ in order to deceive others and to gain a following for themselves. The word that is translated "fables" is the Greek word from which we get our English word, myth. A myth is something which exists only in someone's imagination. The Gospel was not a myth, and it is not a myth. The Gospel of Christ is the truth, and Peter, along with James and

John, had placed all of their hope for heaven upon the truth that they had learned concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: Peter claimed in v. 16 that they had been "eye-witnesses" of Christ and His glory, and he claimed in v. 18 that they were ear-witnesses of what the Father had said when He spoke from heaven.

Now let us go on and examine . . .

II. THE CONTENT OF PETER'S FAITH (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

The first thing that Peter said that he had made known to the believers to whom he was writing was:

A. "The power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:16).

Let us look at this statement for a few minutes. There is a lot of truth here. There are really two points to this statement.

1. First of all, Peter believed in "the power . . . of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What was His "power"?

The "power" of the Lord Jesus Christ was His Deity! He displayed His power in the performance of His miracles. And His miracles demonstrated, according to John 20:31, that He was the Son of God. Nicodemus had not come quite that far, but he was on the way, when he said, "No man can do the miracles that thou doest except God be with him" (John 3:2b).

This is the reason that Peter called Him "our Lord Jesus Christ." This was Peter's great confession in Matt. 16:16. This is the basic tenet of the Christian faith. If Jesus Christ were not the Son of God, then we have no salvation. We have no hope. We are still in our sins, and we might as well close down Trinity Bible Church.

But He is the Son of God, and so we plan to keep our doors open to proclaim the truth of God's Word.

But secondly,

2. Peter believed in "the . . . coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ."

What does this mean?

This means that Peter believed that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a man. He came! Peter had no trouble in believing in the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as in His Deity. He knew that He became a man in order to die for men. And Peter believed that the Lord Jesus Christ in becoming man, continued to be God the Son in every sense of the word. He may not have exercised all of His divine nature while He was here on earth, but He still possessed every one of them in full!

Now this is very important.

If Jesus Christ were only a man, then we do have a fable on our hands. If He were only a man, then He could not be a Saviour. If He had been a mere man, He would have been a sinner, and one sinner cannot save another sinner.

I know that the word that is used here is the Greek word parousia, which usually refers to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but I stand with many commentators who believe that this is one instance in which it was used for His first coming. Surely the context demands such a meaning.

Now when you think of these two claims, remember that, as unusual as they are, they were made by an Apostle who had been with the Lord Jesus Christ during His life here on earth. He knew the Lord intimately. He had heard Him teach. He had seen Him perform miracles. The Lord even gave Peter the power to perform miracles. And here, as Peter wrote some thirty years after the ascension of Christ, he still was firmly convinced that Jesus Christ was God Who had come to the earth as a man. And above all of this evidence, he and James and John had been given the privilege of being "eyewitnesses of his majesty."

But there is a second thing that Peter declared here as a part of his faith, and, therefore, of the faith of every person who would know the salvation God has provided for us in Christ.

B. He had heard God the Father speak from heaven, giving "honour and glory" to His Son (2 Pet. 1:17, 18).

This was God the Father's testimony concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord had received other testimonies.

The angel of the Lord said to the shepherds after Christ was born, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

When old Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God, he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:29, 30).

The message which brought Peter to Christ was that which was given to him by his brother, Andrew, when he said as a testimony to Christ, "We have found the Messias" (John 1:41).

John the Baptist gave several remarkable testimonies. When he saw the Lord coming to him on one occasion, he told his own disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). When the Spirit of God descended upon the Lord at His baptism, John said, "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34).

Peter himself had made that great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

BUT BY FAR THE GREATEST TESTIMONY THAT THE LORD EVER RECEIVED WAS THE TESTIMONY THAT HE WAS GIVEN ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION, A TESTIMONY THAT THE FATHER HAD GIVEN BEFORE, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED" (2 Pet. 1:17; Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).

Peter said here in 2 Pet. 1:18, "And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." The intervening years had not dimmed in Peter's mind the reality of that testimony which he and James and John had heard that day when the Lord had been transfigured before them on that mountain.

NO SUCH TESTIMONY HAD EVER BEEN GIVEN BY GOD THE FATHER TO ANYONE ELSE! The Father was declaring the Deity of His Son. He was declaring the absolute perfection of His Son. He was declaring the incarnation of His Son. During the time that the Lord had

been on earth had He ever displeased the Father. He was eminently qualified to be the Saviour of sinners because He Himself was not a sinner.

Should you and I wonder, then, at Peter's excitement about Christ and "these things" which had to do with Christ? It was not something that Peter and James and John had planned. If it had been, they would have boasted like others who falsely claim that they have had some special revelation from God. Any teaching that does not give Jesus Christ the place that He is given in the Word of God cannot possibly be of God. They are all "cunningly devised fables." And even though they may seem to honor the Lord in a lesser way, any teaching which does not give Jesus Christ the testimony that He is the Son of God and the only Saviour of men, cannot possibly be of God.

Concl: Peter was relating this testimony from God the Father because he believed it! This is what he believed he believed about the Lord Jesus Christ, that He was (and still is) the beloved Son of God, the One in Whom the Father finds all of His delight. And because Peter believed this, we know where he is today. He is in heaven with the Lord, and he is there because of the Lord. Nobody will ever get to heaven who does not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God--and that He came into this world to suffer and die so that sinners could be forgiven, saved, and welcomed into glory when they die.

Now there is a message here for all of us. We all are in one of two classes this morning: those who believe what Peter believed, and those who do not. I am not just talking about believing some facts about Jesus Christ. When we say that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord, the Son of God, we not only have in mind Who He was, but we are expressing our faith also in why He came. We are expressing our faith in Him as our Saviour, and as our Lord. Is that your faith this morning? Are you relying on the fact that you are forgiven of all of your sins because of Christ and His death on the Cross? If not, then perhaps the Lord has brought you here today in order that you might be saved. How wonderful it would be if this were the place and this were the time when you would be saved! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," and believe in Him now.

But most of us are saved. What is the message in this for us?

God's testimony concerning His Son was that He found all of His delight in His Son. There was nothing, and there is nothing today, that in any way displeases the Father. The Father is pleased with all that His Son is, and He is pleased

with all that His Son does, all that He ever has done, and all that He ever will do. God finds all of His delight in His Son.

Now if you are truly a Christian, you want to be pleasing to the Father, too. Is that not how you feel in your heart? Paul expressed the attitude of every true child of God when he said in 2 Cor. 5:9. Let me translate it in a slightly different way from the KJV without changing the meaning at all. That verse means this:

Wherefore we are ambitious, or we make it our aim,
that whether present or absent, living or dead,
we may be well pleasing to Him.

Do you know the only way that you can be pleasing to God the Father? The answer is clear from our text. The only way we can be pleasing to God the Father is to become as much like God the Son as it is possible for us to be! But that is why we have been saved--to be made like Christ! The more we are like Christ in our hearts, and the more we are like Him in what we do, the more pleasing we will be to our heavenly Father. He loves to see in us those qualities such as faith, and virtue, and knowledge, and self-control, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and love, which are all to be found perfectly in Christ!

May our daily prayer be that we, by the grace of God, may become more and more like our dear Saviour, that our Father in heaven may find more and more delight in us!