

Stick to Your Faith

Bible Background • 2 PETER 1

Printed Text • 2 PETER 1:1–15 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 90

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: DISCERN the importance of faith and the call of God to authentic life and godliness, APPRECIATE a life of faith in Christ after redemption from sinfulness, and PRACTICE the virtues of goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love.

In Focus

“I just don’t understand you,” Isaac complained to his wife. “I told you that I would take care of the utility bill later this week!”

They were arguing, something that seemed to occur more and more frequently. Audrey thought Isaac was not concerned enough about their finances. Some of the bills were behind, but he had assured her that he would make sure they got paid. Why couldn’t she just leave it alone? Why couldn’t he just pay them? The bills had been delinquent before, but hadn’t they always paid them?

Audrey and Isaac constantly fought about their poor credit rating. Audrey felt certain Isaac blamed her for not being able to purchase a new car or house. Isaac just wanted her to stop blaming him for not figuring out their finances. Why didn’t she understand that he wanted reliable transportation and a home for her and their two children just as much as she did? He just didn’t have the time to sit down and make a plan. The constant reminders from a bill collector’s call or another late notice letter only seemed to make things worse. If she were a better wife and he a better husband, they each thought, then, their trust level for one another would increase. Could they wait for things to get better?

In today’s lesson, we will see that faith is not equivalent to blind optimism. To live godly lives, we must not succumb to laziness or our own thoughts. How do you take advantage of the godly resources available to you?

Keep in Mind

“And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires” (2 Peter 1:4, NLT)

Words You Should Know

A. Add to (v. 5) epichorego (Gk.) — To minister to or supply with

B. Godliness (v. 6) eusebeia (Gk.) — Piety

Say It Correctly

none

KJV

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:
4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.
10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:
11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.
13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;
14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.
15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

NLT

2 Peter 1:1 This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.2 May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.
3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.
4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.
5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge,
6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness,
7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.
8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.
10 So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.
11 Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught.

13 And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live.

14 For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life,

15 so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone.

The People, Places, and Times

Simon Peter. He was also known as Cephas, which is transliterated from the Aramaic word kepha and means “rock.” Peter was the Galilean fisherman who, along with his brother Andrew, was chosen to be one of Jesus’ twelve disciples. Peter’s given name was Simon, and his father’s name was Jonah (Matthew 16:17; John 1:42). Peter is often described as the bold disciple who became one of Jesus’ three closest associates, along with James and John. They accompanied Jesus during His most significant events—raising Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:35–42), praying in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–46), and becoming radiant in glory in the Transfiguration (17:1–5). Peter answered Jesus’ question, “Whom say ye that I am?” (16:15) with “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus called him “blessed” and said, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (16:18). Peter had times of weakness. He told the Lord that he would never forsake Him, but when Jesus was inside being interrogated by Caiaphas and other religious leaders, Peter denied Him three times in the high priest’s courtyard. Yet the disciple who denied Him became one of the strongest key leaders in the early church.

Blindness. God placed a curse on anyone who misdirected a blind person (Deuteronomy 27:18). Jesus explained that a part of His ministry entailed restoring sight to the blind (Luke 4:18), and He healed many blind people (John 9:1–41; Mark 8:22–25; Matthew 20:30–34). Blind eyes being opened is also used throughout Scripture as a metaphor for spiritual insight or visions that people could only have received from God (Numbers 22:31; 2 Kings 6:17; Luke 24:31). Spiritual blindness is worse than physical blindness because it always comes with deception and guile, specifically for the one who is blind. Jesus taught this principle to the Pharisees when He healed a blind man in the temple and used the event to castigate the “blind” Pharisees, who were more concerned with religious traditions than the power of God (see John 9:1–41).

Background

The epistle traditionally named 2 Peter is a text whose purpose is primarily to refute false teachers. In order to refute falsehood, however, one must robustly affirm the truth, which Peter is careful to do. This letter also has one of the most direct affirmations of the deity of Christ, where the author refers to “the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (1:1). This core Christian belief colors the rest of the book, reminding us that the truth of the Gospel is a truth of divine weight and worth. It also reminds us that the One who called us, the One who works in us, and the One who died for us is divine.

How does Scripture help us respond to false teaching about Christ’s work?

At-A-Glance

1. Partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Peter 1:1–4)
2. Is Anything To Be Added To Faith? (vv. 5–11)
3. Remember! (vv. 12–15)

In Depth

1. Partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Peter 1:1–4)

Here is perhaps the most profound picture of redemption found in the Scriptures. After the introductory two verses, the author turns the eyes and ears of the believer to the power of God, which is the source of all gifts, power, and promises. But verse 4 introduces an idea that has been controversial and variably understood. The goal of salvation, according to the author, is that we might be “partakers of the divine nature.” We must not understand this to mean that we literally become the Creator of the universe. There is a distinction between the Creator and the creature. The reality that Peter highlights is that the relationship to which God has called us brings us closer to Him than anything we could ever imagine. Faith in Christ unites us to God in ways that we can only fathom, and it is in awe of that reality that we live out the imperatives of the Christian life, not to earn God’s favor, but as a result of our basking in His grace.

In what ways does God tell us to be like Him? In what ways are we not like Him?

2. Is Anything to Be Added to Faith? (vv. 5–11)

Next, Peter lists the virtues needed for an everimproving Christian life, starting with faith. Peter is not saying that faith is unnecessary. Instead, he explains what is necessary for us to sufficiently live out the Christian life. True, vibrant faith is at the core of and accompanied by virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. The believer must cultivate these gifts and pursue their continued development (v. 8). The qualities described are not static; rather, they must be practiced. Those who do practice these (and practice them so that their skill improves) will never fall from grace. Those who do not are not in danger of losing their salvation (which is impossible), but they are called blind, acting as though they have forgotten they are now clean from sin. What keeps us from being diligent about these qualities? Which of these is the hardest for you?

3. Remember! (vv. 12–15)

Some complain about the repetitiveness of hearing the Good News over and over again, but Peter will have none of that complaint. As he says, he must always remind us of these things, even if we know them and are established in them (v. 12). The reminder stirs us to love and action, and it keeps it ever at the forefront of our minds. The goodness of Christ and the glory to which he has called us are far too precious to be forgotten. *What is your biggest distraction from the glory of God and the glory of the future inheritance that He has promised you upon Christ’s return?*

Search the Scriptures

1. How could we misinterpret 2 Peter 1:4? What are the hazards of claiming to be too much like God?
2. In the rest of the Scripture, how does God exhibit the qualities added to faith (virtue, knowledge, etc.)?
3. What are the “great and precious promises” granted to us by the knowledge of God (v. 4)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. How does the list of attributes in verses 5–7 compare with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)?
2. How ought we respond to corruption in the world?

Liberating Lesson

The word “escaped” in 2 Peter 1:4 may appear to suggest that the relationship between us and corruption is one of fear, such that we should flee from the world because it is corrupted. This, however, would be out of step with the rest of the Scriptures. Instead we are to interact with the world around us, having been freed by Christ from its corruption. This allows us to bring the Gospel into whatever spheres the Lord has placed us, whether

work, school, or our local community. Having been freed by Christ, we can interact with the world with our guard up against sinful desire. No sphere is off limits to the body of Christ, and as His hands and feet, we must be willing to shine the light of truth into the darkness. By diligently doing so, we come to a deeper experience of God's grace and His mercy.

Application for Activation

Peter's advice is helpful to every Christian. It reminds us to make sure we are regularly meeting with other believers so that we can remind one another of the qualities that are developed by adherence to the Gospel. We must examine our responses to the world around us to be sure we are exhibiting self-control, virtue, and godliness. It is also important to remember that from time to time, we may find someone that we think is difficult to love. In those times we must remember the love that Christ has shown to us so that we can love those people as well.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

2 Peter 1:1–15 1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Peter wastes no time in his epistle and jumps deep into theology. When we are born into the family of God by faith in Christ, we are born complete. God gives us “all things” we will ever need for “life and godliness” (v. 3). Nothing has to be added or taken away. Just as a baby has a definite genetic structure that determines how he or she will grow, so the believer is structured to experience glory and virtue. The divine power of God that is prepared to give us all things is the Holy Spirit, the same power that raised Jesus from the grave (Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18). God has already freely “given unto us all things.” We do not obtain these things on our own; by having faith in God, we will receive all the things He has for us. We must acknowledge that He is the one who has called us to “grace and peace” and “glory and virtue.” Before we acknowledged or knew God, He knew us and imparted grace unto us, along with plenty of mercy. The Greek word here for “knowledge” is epignosis (eh-pee-guh- NO-sis), which implies “recognition.” Because we recognize Him as God, He is eager to provide for us.

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Our Father has made great promises that lead us to a great life. Because He is a great God, He can and will keep them all. The Word of God is full of many promises for a range of situations. There are promises for eternal life, forgiveness, healing, joy, peace, and prosperity. God's greatest promise, however, was the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. God has given us His Word, which enables us to develop new life and godliness. The Word—Jesus—in turn promised God would give the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:26).

The purpose of God's promises is to enable us to become "partakers of his divine nature." God is at work in us to transform us so we can truly live like those who bear the divine image. This promise of Scripture is one of the many "already/not yet" aspects of Christ's salvation. We are already partakers of the divine nature, as Christ's righteousness already covers our sin. We have already escaped the corruption of the world's lust, as we are no longer slaves to sin. However, we have not yet partaken in the consummation of God's glorious nature when we will enjoy full fellowship with God. We have also not yet fully escaped the world's corruption, as we still live on the earth.

We should not pine away for the "not yet" aspects of our salvation, though. One day we will be like the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2). We shall share that glory when Jesus Christ returns and takes His people to heaven. However, we have been saved so that we might "shew forth the praises [virtues]" of God (1 Peter 2:9). We cannot wait until we get to heaven to become like Jesus Christ! In our character and conduct, we should begin to reveal His beauty and grace today.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Because we are now partakers of God's divine character, we must mature spiritually. To do this, we must add (Gk. *epichorego*, ep-ee-khor-AYGroo) to our faith, that is, minister to it and supply our faith with what it needs. Those needs are the virtuous qualities that Peter then lists, which grow out of our vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter lists seven qualities of a faithful life: virtue, knowledge, temperance (i.e., selfcontrol), patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (i.e., divine love). The form of this list and many of the items on it would be familiar to secular philosophers of the time. This kind of list, called a *gradatio*, emphasizes the process of building one thing on top of another, rising to the climax of the final step. Terms like virtue (Gk. *arete*, ar-uh-TAY, moral excellence) and godliness (Gk. *eusebeia*, ew-SAY-bay-uh, piety) were already familiar to people trying to live good lives in Peter's day. But Peter takes these ideals and couches them in a Christian understanding. Our basis for virtue or moral excellence is not our own goodness, but our faith; we show our godliness not to an entire pantheon, but to the One True God. While other philosophers might argue over which virtue is the most important, Peter is clear here: The greatest of these is "charity" (Gk. *agape*, ah-GAH-pay), divine love (cf. Colossians 3:14). In a similar *gradatio*, Paul builds from trials to hope, with hope again being based on the love God shows us and gives us to show others (Romans 5:3–5).

It is impossible for human nature to manufacture these seven qualities of Christian character; the Spirit of God must produce them. Because we have a divine nature, we can grow spiritually and develop these qualities. God wants us to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29).

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The results of adding up the seven qualities mentioned earlier are that they strengthen, encourage, and improve our lives and the lives of those around us. Where these qualities are present, there will be an abundance of good works (2 Corinthians 9:8), that is, we will bring forth fruit. To "neither be barren nor unfruitful" means that we do not just sit around, idle. If these qualities are to exist within us, we must learn to cultivate them so that they produce fruitful results in our lives. There is much work to do in God's kingdom (Luke 10:2). The more we become like Jesus Christ, the more the Holy Spirit can use us in witness and service. As Christians, we are

commanded to exhort, edify, and comfort one another, continuously building each other up in God's holy faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13).

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

The phrase "cannot see afar off" denotes that a person is nearsighted and can only see those things that are close to them. Spiritually, believers who are nearsighted can only see things they can touch. They have no vision for the future, can only see today, and are without hope for tomorrow.

In addition, often we forget that Jesus died to cleanse us of our sins. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we have been purged and forgiven. If we forget this, though, we will not see the ever-increasing qualities that Peter has listed. When we forget what God has done for us, when our viewpoint lacks expansive knowledge of Jesus Christ, we will not be excited to witness to others about Him. Peter determines to keep reminding believers of their freedom from sin, over and over, even when it seems like they understand, until he dies (vv. 12–15).

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

Peter admonishes us to be diligent, to exert ourselves. While it is true that God must work in us before we can do His will (Philippians 2:12–23), it is also true that we must be willing to work for God, and we must cooperate with Him. Instead of following those who are spiritually blind and suffering from forgetfulness, with diligence we are to take our invitation from God and accept the benefits of salvation. Living diligently deepens our awareness of the divine power within us (v. 3), which gives us all things needed for life (v. 5–7) and makes our "calling and election sure" (v. 10). If we as believers can apply the Word of God and live according to the will of God, then we will not fail in Christian living. God's grace has enabled us to keep the faith of our election steadfast in Christ. We must walk in righteousness and in good works. Doing so will keep us from falling into sin. Because we are growing, we can look forward to an abundant life here and entrance into heaven.

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

When we live as God wants us to, He promises us an abundant life and entrance into His kingdom. We will have riches of knowledge and holiness beyond our thoughts. Peter draws a parity here between our actions and God's. The same Greek word (epichoregeo) translated "add to" in verse 5 is translated "be ministered unto" here. Entrance into the kingdom is a gift from God through Christ Jesus, but it corresponds with diligence. As we add virtues to our faith, God adds the blessings of the inheritance to our salvation.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Pastors, ministers, and teachers alike are to teach God's precepts with the goal of making their students "established," that is, able to stand on their own feet. Here Peter was saying that it was his responsibility to always remind the people of God's goodness toward them. He realized that although they knew the precepts of God, people's tendency to forget may cause them to take things for granted (cf. v. 9). By reminding them of God's divine grace, mercy, and goodness, Peter was reminding them to never forget the basis for their faith. The Christian who consistently reads the Bible and knows what he or she believes and why—that Christian will rarely be seduced by false teachers and their false doctrines. As we become established in the truth, we will not be shaken or moved by the problems we encounter in this world. We can stand on the truth—the Word of God!

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; 14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed

me. 15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Peter realizes that his death is at hand. Christ has revealed to Peter the kind of death he will face (see John 21:18–19). In the time he has left, Peter realizes he must stimulate the knowledge of the people of God. Three times in this passage, he asks them to always remember the things he taught them (2 Peter 1:12–13, 15). Peter indeed left behind something that would never die—the written Word of God. The epistles of 1 and 2 Peter have been ministering to the saints for centuries. People die, but the Word of God lives on!

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

The Spirit and the Bride Say Come
(Revelation 22:14–17)

TUESDAY

Our Dwelling Place
(Psalm 90)

WEDNESDAY

One Day Like One Thousand Years
(2 Peter 3:8–10)

THURSDAY

The Coming Day of the Lord
(2 Peter 3:11–15, 17–18)

FRIDAY

This Is My Son; Listen to Him!
(Luke 9:28–36)

SATURDAY

Solid Reasons for Hope
(2 Peter 1:16–21)

SUNDAY

Always Keep the Faith
(2 Peter 1:1–15)