

Add To Your Faith

2 Peter 1:5-9

Go ahead and turn to 2 Peter 1 in your Bibles. When we started this series, we saw Peter pray...

2 Peter 1:2

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

And last week we saw that that verse is just part of the sentence in the Greek, that it continues to “run on” through verse four. The wording in the Greek that connects verse two with the verses that follow implies CAUSALITY. Peter essentially says, “I can pray that prayer BECAUSE **‘His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...’**”

We’re building. It’s in the knowledge of Him that grace and peace are lavished upon us, and it’s through the knowledge of Him that we’ve been granted everything necessary for life and godliness. The bestowing of **“his precious and very great promises,”** another designation for **“the knowledge of God,”** make it possible for us to **“become partakers of the divine nature,”** which is what we need for life and godliness, and proceed forth from God’s character, specifically His “glory and excellence.” It sort of forms something like an hourglass, two arrows pointing inward to the focal point in the center: God’s glory and excellence, which gives rise to the knowledge of Himself being bestowed upon us, which is the vehicle for the provision of all things necessary for life and godliness, making us partakers of the divine nature.

Peter repeats himself in a way that leaps forward, takes a step back to catch us up with an explanation, and then leaps forward again. Because of how everything he shares with us is intertwined, his thoughts seemingly spiderweb; they fold and unfold, and then fold over themselves in a completely new way. Scholars describe how the whole thought is cumbersome even in the Greek, which is why translators feel the need to break it into multiple sentences in English. Given how all the thoughts are so interconnected, though, I’m not sure it helps. Truly, I believe Peter’s explanation of all of this is a bit of an illustration of how life and reality isn’t as compartmented as we tend to think. Everything touches; one thing affects a dozen other things. All that said, if I were to boil this down to a formula, Peter’s saying that...

GOD’S CHARACTER compels Him to REVEAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIMSELF that EQUIPS US TO LIVE GODLY LIVES.

This is who God is because He’s PERSONAL. This not only bears witness to the truth that God is a Trinity—three Persons who are equal in power, eternity, and therefore, deity, yet distinct in identity,

and still perfect in harmony—but it's also directly tied to the purpose of our existence, which is TO KNOW GOD FULLY. From previous discussions, we understand that God is meant to be known and experienced with experience giving rise to greater knowledge, which in turn gives rise to deeper experience with Him.

There is a GROWTH PROCESS, and because of this Pastor Dale, Tim and I knew of no better series title than "Grow in Jesus," and what Peter drives home in his letter, especially in tonight's passage, is that THIS GROWTH DOESN'T HAPPEN ON ITS OWN. In light of God's gracious provision for growth, our vital need for growth, and our cooperative role in this growth, Peter says in verse five...

2 Peter 1:5-9

5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

There's so much teaching contained in these short five verses! The vastness and profundity of the wisdom contained in this list and the surrounding instructions almost leave us gasping for breath, as if we're atop a great mountain where the air is thin. However, as we meditate on these verses tonight, we'll see that Peter carefully and methodically guides us to the top of this mountain, beginning where everyone must, at the bottom with faith.

Faith is *total dependence*. Before someone is saved, their total dependence is in some idol, usually themselves. Upon coming to repentance (a change of mind that results in a changed life), a lost person recognizes his worthlessness as an object of faith and places his faith instead in Jesus Christ as he calls on Him to save him. Faith is the means by which we respond to God's grace and receive the gift of eternal life. In other passages, the word *faith* can refer to our shared Christian doctrine, as it seems to do in Titus 1:4 or Jude 3. However, given that the knowledge of God will be addressed a bit later, I'm convinced Peter is talking about the ground floor, entry level, threshold for salvation. It's first in the list, preeminent and foundational. You can't build a Christian life on the sandy foundation of lostness; such a life can only be built upon the rock of Jesus Christ through faith.

The list of qualities that follows is called a "sorites" (sore-EYE-tees), which is an ancient form of argument in which each element builds upon the one immediately preceding it. As I've already mentioned and will continue to mention, this indicates an INTENTIONAL GROWTH PROCESS in which we are responsible to supply EFFORT and DISCIPLINE. Kenneth Boa said...

"We have been given a response-ability, an ability to respond to or neglect these divine initiatives, and from a human standpoint, our relationship with God is determined by our willingness to reciprocate."

Sanctification, like salvation, is a COOPERATIVE PROCESS. Jesus saves, but Romans 10 tells us that we must CALL upon Him for salvation (Romans 10:9-10, 13). In the same way, it is the Lord who sanctifies us, but we must respond to His process. This is something that Paul taught the Philippians. After he had just finished describing all that Christ Jesus suffered to secure our salvation, Paul told them...

Philippians 2:12-13

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Paul taught the Philippians to **"work out"** their salvation, *κατεργαζομαι*, "kah-ter-gad'-zom-aye" in the Greek, and it has nothing to do with figuring out or resolving anything; that's an error of applying a modern expression to an ancient concept. *κατεργαζομαι* means *to perform, to accomplish, to WORK OUT*, in this case, your salvation. The assurance we have, as Tim taught last week, is that the Lord has provided all we need for this. We are responsible to diligently apply the means of grace that He has provided.

Now, before we examine this list of "qualities," I want to make it clear that Paul wasn't teaching to supplement faith with works in order to merit salvation, and neither was Peter. The only work that factors into salvation is Christ's work on the cross, dying for the sins of humanity. Prior to salvation, our works were filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). They were **"dead works"** to be repented of as we ceased placing our faith in ourselves and placed it in Christ alone (Hebrews 6:1). Having come to know Christ, however, **"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10)**, these works are the fine linens of the Bride of Christ (Revelation 19:8). This is the heart of both Peter and Paul's writings on this. In light of such great provision, Peter urges us to **"make every effort to supplement [our] faith,"** and the first quality we're to add to our life of faith in Christ is VIRTUE!

VIRTUE

After trusting Christ, VIRTUE is of FIRST IMPORTANCE because everything that comes afterward is built upon it. If you're not committed to obeying God in all things, at some point or another, you'll balk at the rest of this list and any other instructions given throughout Scripture. The Greek word for virtue is the same word for God's "excellence" back in verse three, and it can literally be translated, **"DO RIGHT!"** Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said it this way, *"Do right till the stars fall!"* It's natural to ask, *"Well, then, how do I do right?"* However, that's the wrong question; that's getting ahead of ourselves. Virtue SIMPLY asks, *"WILL I do right?"* Sadly, though, many operate with the thinking that says, *"Tell me what I have to do, and then I'll decide if I'm going to do it."* This is the problem of the doubter who asks God for wisdom...

James 1:6-8

6 But let him [the one who asks for wisdom] ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

The word translated *doubted* (Gk. διακρῖνω) carries the meaning *to hesitate, make a distinction, discriminate, to try, decide, or judge*. It essentially says, "I'll hear what You have to say, God, and then decide what to do with it." But who's "God" in that scenario? ME! No, God expects us to recognize that HE'S GOD and we're not, and commit to DOING RIGHT, fulfilling the purpose of our creation. PERIOD. God told Abraham, "Go." Jesus told those who would become His disciples, "Follow Me." No other details were necessary, just a willingness to obey. You say, "You're talking blind obedience." No, I'm not talking about obedience based in blindness, but in FAITH. Oh, yeah! That's what the quality of virtue is built upon! Faith! Faith in the One who made us, who sits enthroned outside of time and has seen every moment of our lives from beginning to end, who sent His Son to die for us while we were still sinners, who saves us when we call, and who will graciously give us all things just as He gave His precious Son a propitiation for sin! Knowing what you know about this One who demands your obedience, can you follow Him without knowing where? I believe I CAN, and I WILL!

Of course, God does illumine our understanding of HOW to do right. Truly, these qualities are so intertwined that you can't talk too long about virtue without tripping over the next quality. Peter wrote...

2 Peter 1:5

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,

KNOWLEDGE

Having committed in your heart to DO RIGHT, you'll immediately apply knowledge of what's right when it's presented. Now, the Greek word translated "knowledge" in verses two and three is the word *epignōsis*, which has to do with a PRECISE, CORRECT, FULL knowledge of God that we seek to attain. Here in verse five, Peter uses the word *gnōsis*, which has to do with both GENERAL knowledge AS WELL AS a "DEEPER more PERFECT and ENLARGED" knowledge that ultimately touches on lawful CONDUCT, right LIVING, and MORAL WISDOM. Combined, these definitions speak of a general, BEGINNER'S knowledge that GROWS into the deeper and broader knowledge possess by a MATURE FOLLOWER.

I emphasize "FOLLOWER," because of the definition's emphasis on DOING. Knowledge that fails to affect PRACTICE isn't COMPLETE, but that's what we're going for, right? In order to continue growing in knowledge, one must ACT UPON it, which is why, I believe, VIRTUE is first on the list. This knowledge GROWS out of virtue, increasing with our obedience! The psalmist described this as he also pointed out the source of this knowledge. He wrote...

Psalms 119:105

**Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.**

God gives us enough light for the NEXT STEP. In a sense, He gives us what we need for TODAY. When we TRUST God and OBEDIENTLY step into what He's revealed, we find there's now light for the NEXT STEP. For this reason, Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost used to put it this way,

"Do right according to His Word, then God becomes obligated to put His will in your path."

Whenever I share this with anyone, I'm regularly met with raised eyebrows and expressions of astonishment. *"Obligated,"* people say. *"That's a strong word,"* and it is, but here's the thing. God isn't obligated to us; He's obligated to Himself! Think about it, what glory is there to be had for the Lord in hiding His will from someone who's earnestly seeking Him? NONE! God has spoken. His Word is clear, and if we're obedient students of His Word, He will speak to us through it and guide us further according to our obedience.

I tell you, though! We know all of this! Peter says that later! *"I know you know all of this; I'm just stirring you up by way of reminder!"* We know all of this, but as Pastor Kevin said a couple of weeks ago, it's so easy FOR OUR ACTIONS TO BE UNAFFECTED BY WHAT WE KNOW. We so easily drift into autopilot and FAIL TO APPLY growing knowledge! So, what do we do? Look at what comes next. Peter says, **"supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge..."**

**2 Peter 1:6a
and knowledge with self-control..**

There's such FLOW! By FAITH we enter into a relationship with Jesus. We add VIRTUE (EXCELLENCE) to our faith as we COMMIT TO OBEY and walk with Him. As we walk with Him, we add KNOWLEDGE to our commitment to do right so that the knowledge of God overtakes all of our lives. Then, to ensure that we continue applying this growing knowledge (instead of getting stuck in autopilot) we add SELF-CONTROL to knowledge and virtue.

SELF-CONTROL

Previously, when I've taught on this passage, I've emphasized that this was actually the SPIRIT'S CONTROL of our SELVES, the Spirit-controlled life of the believer that Paul wrote about in Ephesians 5. While I still believe that to be partially true, in that it's true for the entire list of qualities, as we'll see at the end of our lesson, this quality has to do with MASTERY OVER ONE'S OWN DESIRES, and PASSIONS, especially SENSUAL APPETITES. Paul compared his efforts to maintain self-control to those of an athlete.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable

wreath, but we are imperishable. **26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.**

“Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.” On Sunday, Pastor Kevin mentioned the upcoming Olympics. The athletes competing in those games, especially those who medal, don’t live like the rest of us. They exercise self-control in all things! They aren’t free to eat whatever they want, go to bed when they want, or get up when they want. Paul said that he kept his body **“under control,”** and by that he meant that he *enslaved* his body; I’m sure Olympic athletes sometimes feel like slaves to their sport. They punish their bodies with extreme workouts. Paul said he disciplined his body, which literally translates to BEATING HIS BODY BLACK AND BLUE! Though I doubt he literally beat himself up (he had a line of people ready to do that for him), such a phrase conveys just how seriously he took obedience and self-control. He was talking about living in obedience to the knowledge of God that he taught others to live in so as not to be disqualified from ministering in such a way. That takes self-control, and when a believer’s circumstances became difficult, another quality had to grow out of self-control. Peter wrote to come alongside...

2 Peter 1:6a

and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness,

STEADFASTNESS

After we've committed to DOING RIGHT, pursuing the KNOWLEDGE of God in His Word, and mastering sinful impulses, we must supply STEADFASTNESS. While self-control has to do more with restraining sinful passions, steadfastness emphasizes CONTINUING OBEDIENCE IN SPITE OF HARDSHIP. This word in the Greek describes "a man who is NOT SWERVED from his DELIBERATE PURPOSE and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings" (NET Bible). Steadfastness literally means to REMAIN UNDER PRESSURE. James said it this way...

James 1:2-4

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect (REMAIN!!! Don't hit the eject button!), that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The difference between COASTING and PERSEVERING is SUFFERING. It's one thing to roll something down a hill; it's another to push something up one. No one likes this one. No one invites suffering into their lives, BUT THE WORD IS CLEAR: suffering is an ESSENTIAL and UNAVOIDABLE part of the Christian walk. James tells us that STEADFASTNESS in the midst of trials brings SPIRITUAL MATURITY. Paul taught the believers in Rome that suffering produced steadfastness, which in turn produced PROVEN CHARACTER and HOPE (Romans 5:3-5). My mentor's mentor, Dr. Mark Cambron said it this way, "The testing is always before the blessing." The maturity, the proven character, and the hope, those are the blessings. When the trials come, don't try to "save yourself." Don't slip out from under the burden.

OBEY God. Rather than making maneuvers to get out from under the burden, remain in the fray of whatever He's calling you to do, trusting Him to do the saving. You may be in that FRAY right now, and it's HARD. HANG ON. God hasn't abandoned you. His will isn't for you to give up and give out on Him. His will is for you to trust Him, to look to Him in all things, which grows into the next quality. We're to come alongside...

2 Peter 1:6

and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,

GODLINESS

Godliness is the ATTITUDE THAT DESIRES TO PLEASE GOD, and at the beginning of the letter, Peter promises that God has given us everything we need to live godly. I like how some scholars have described it as a "Godward attitude." It's a constant mindfulness of God that directs us through our days. When Paul wrote Titus, he taught that...

Titus 2:11-12

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

God's grace (that Peter prayed would be multiplied in our lives) TRAINS US in godliness. It trains us to live a life looking UP, checking with God and seeking to please Him throughout our days. We need this quality to grow in our lives because we can begin operating out of a desire to please men instead of God. This shows up most when we act one way, let's say, while we're at church or work or otherwise in public, and another way at home or when we're alone. We more readily give ourselves permission to live differently, to sin, in those settings because we're more concerned with what other people think rather than what God thinks, and we know that those we seek to impress aren't present.

If godliness is growing in us, there will be no change regardless of where we are or who we're with because we acknowledge and live in the understanding that God is always with us, and our heart's desire is to please Him. Godliness says, "It's not about me! It's not even about others! IT'S ALL ABOUT HIM." This Godward attitude grows out of the quality of steadfastness, as it MUST, because steadfastness has to do with REMAINING under pressure in the fiery trial. Why? Why would we do that?! Because our motivation, obviously, isn't to please ourselves or others, but to PLEASE GOD.

It's out of this quality that looks up in order to please God that makes it possible to LOOK OUT and allow the next quality to grow and become part of our spirituality. Peter tells us to come alongside...

2 Peter 1:7a

and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

BROTHERLY AFFECTION

The first five qualities have emphasized the INNER LIFE, one's personal relationship with God, but brotherly affection moves outward. This is the first quality in Peter's list that SHOWS. In his first letter, Peter encouraged the brethren to love like this...

1 Peter 1:22

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

Brotherly affection (Gk. *philadelphia*) always seems to be a precursor to love (Gk. *agape*). This love is "sincere," meaning that it's GENUINE, without hypocrisy. Specifically, it's love that seeks to meet the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ! We're BROTHERS AND SISTERS! We're FAMILY, and as such, we bear with and look out for one another. Peter also described this love for the brethren as EARNEST, which in the Greek literally means to *stretch out one's hand*. Brotherly affection REACHES OUT! It's also evidence that we have been born again. The Apostle John stated the easily understood truth that...

1 John 5:1-2

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

Paul said at the end of Romans 13, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:14). Finally, Peter reaches the crescendo as he teaches us to come alongside...

LOVE

2 Peter 1:7

and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

Brotherly affection generally exists between believers, and it's fueled by something good in the one who's loved. You have a connection; you're motivated to love that other person because they're your brother or sister in Christ. Agape, on the other hand, is the INTENTIONAL and UNCONDITIONAL choice to love. Brotherly affection is concerned with meeting the needs of the brethren while love SEEKS THE HIGHEST GOOD of all, regardless of who they are or what they've done (or not done). This is the love that God showed when we were lost. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8b).

While adding virtue to our faith lays the foundation for growing in the qualities that follow it, agape love encompasses everything before it. Love is the PRINCIPLE fruit of the Spirit. As some Greek scholars have stated, the Galatians "fruit of the Spirit" passage might be better translated that "the [singular] fruit of the Spirit is love, [out of which flows] joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). Given that LOVE is

the principle fruit of the Spirit, out of which the rest flow, it makes perfect sense that spiritual maturity is CROWNED by love. Paul said that out of faith, hope and love, **“the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13b)**, and John said that **“God IS love” (1 John 4:8b)**. Therefore, it’s clear that LOVE is the greatest, and it’s clear that dependence upon the Spirit is essential for its outworking and growth.

Here’s where dependence upon the spirit encompasses all of these qualities. Paul instructs us to be “filled” or CONTROLLED by the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. As he conveys the same message in Romans 12, using the illustration of a life laid down yet lived as a sacrifice, he teaches that we’re TRANSFORMED. As we surrender to the Spirit’s work in our lives—which is our spiritual worship—meeting Him with grace-fueled obedience, we are CHANGED, conformed further into the image of the One who is LOVE. And just like that, we’re back to faith, depending upon God to change us as we respond to His sanctifying initiative. Peter caps off his sorites on spiritual maturity with an amazing promise, saying...

2 Peter 1:8-9

8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Peter says that, if we possess these qualities in an ever-increasing manner, they ENSURE that our knowledge, *epignōsis* this time, of our Lord Jesus Christ has an EFFECT and FRUIT. This echoes how the knowledge of God gives is everything we need to live godly lives. Ultimately, this can only mean that our lives will be further sanctified, resulting in more spiritual births in those around us as well as their sanctification! Peter reference to **“increasing”** teaches that supplying these qualities requires ONGOING EFFORT. To use Paul’s example of the disciplined athlete, it would be like saying to a runner...



"If you possess the qualities of healthy eating habits, sufficient hydration, flexibility, proper form, and a balance between pushing yourself to the limit while getting adequate rest, you'll never be an unsuccessful runner."

Do you see how a runner could GROW or DIMINISH in all those areas? Peter tells believers, **"Make every effort"** to CONTINUE SUPPLEMENTING **"faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love,"** and he promises that we

will always grow and effectively live in the knowledge of the Lord. However, Peter also talks about what it looks like when a believer LACKS these qualities. He says...

2 Peter 1:9

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

The Greek word translated nearsighted is the word from which we get "myopia." It means to squint in order to see. Carnal Christians have spiritual myopia, squinting to see life in a spiritual manner, as if they're as blind to it all as a LOST PERSON. Note that Peter says that this person "**was cleansed from his former sins.**" HE IS SAVED, but he's forgotten that. I've counseled with folks over the years who have said something to the effect of, "*I've asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins and come into my life and save me, but sometimes I JUST DON'T FEEL SAVED.*"

Have you ever been told that? Ever had someone come to you and ask you if *THEY* are saved? We know that is NOT something we can tell another person. I can't look into your heart and see whether or not you have repented and placed your faith in Christ. I can watch your life and look for evidence of salvation, but in the end, only you and God know that. You know one thing almost all of the people who have such doubts have in common? They're not growing in the Lord.

When people come to me saying things like this, I ask them, "*What passage are you studying in your Bible right now?*" At best they tell me that they read random passages each day, and usually, they confess that they haven't read their Bible in a while. "*What are your prayer habits like?*" They invariably tell me they pray at mealtimes, or that they "*could always pray more,*" which is often code for "*I don't really pray.*" The toughest question to get an honest answer to is, "*Is there a sin in your life that you're holding on to instead of confessing and fighting?*" A bold few have revealed such sins to me. Regardless of how they answer, I still REFUSE to tell them, "*Oh, you're good. You know you have trusted Christ.*" What I do point out is that it's hard to "feel like you're saved" when all you do is live like you're lost.

JESUS MUST BE PURSUED. "Follow Me," He calls. This world system has been set up by the devil to pull you away from the Lord. Failure to pursue Jesus in His Word and obedience is like standing on a treadmill. Standing still is going backwards; running after Jesus is ABIDING or staying near Him. Life is a sojourn with Jesus. We're traveling together. ONGOING EFFORT is required.

I tell you, as I've prepared to teach this passage, one of my favorite passages in all of Scripture, I'VE BEEN CONVICTED. The Lord has shown me areas in which I've just been walking (or even standing still) on the treadmill of this world when I should've been RUNNING. I'm thankful for the Lord's kindness in bringing me to repentance, and it's my prayer tonight that He's shown you a few things as well.

Are these qualities yours? Are they growing? If not, what's lacking? Peter was inspired to give us a set of qualities by which to MEASURE our spiritual maturity (and it's no coincidence that there's seven of them, a number signifying completion throughout Scripture), and he's assured us with the promise of

God's provision for the process. Where do you need to grow? Let's partner with the Lord in our sanctification and add to our faith.