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## **Progressive Sanctification in the Plan of Salvation** **2 Peter 1:3-11**

Thank you for being here this morning. This morning we are finishing our ten week study called Transformed by Truth. One of the highlights for me these past ten weeks is getting to learn from Gary Meeks. The best people to learn truth from are people whose lives are clearly being changed by what their teaching. It's obvious the Spirit of God is using the Word of God to work in Gary's heart and life. He is a faithful example of what we have been learning in this class.

One of the things we are considering in this ten week study is that every Christian is called to counsel. *We are all called to speak the truth in love to one another.* There are no benchwarmers in the body of Christ. We all have a role to play. Remember what Paul reminded the believers in Ephesus. In the how to walk worthy section of Ephesians listen to what Paul reminded them in Ephesians 4:11-16:

Ephesians 4:11-16

- 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,
- 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
- 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
- 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

What word did you hear in those verses? **We.** Christ gave different people in the church different gifts to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. There is a role for the pastor and there is a role for every believer. The role of the pastor is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. That word equip originally had the idea of setting in place a broken bone. **When one part of the body is broken, it is the privilege of the rest of the body to step in and seek to provide healing.** We all have a role to play in that. What does healing look like in the body of Christ? All of us speaking truth in love to help each other mature in Christ is how God is glorified in the local church.

What is our main goal when we meet with other believers? Our main goal is to make sure they are on the right spiritual path. They may talk to you about their various problems and we help them the most by making sure they are on the right spiritual path. Being on the right path from here to heaven puts their problem in the right perspective.

Sometimes when we meet with other believers they feel stuck. It's like their spiritual wheels are spinning and there's no movement, no traction. 2 Peter 1:3-11 are great verses to walk people through to help them get spiritual traction in their walk with God.

Let's start by reading these verses together:

2 Peter 1:3-11

- 3 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,
- 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.
- 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.
- 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.
- 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In these verses in 2 Peter, the call is really to be diligent to confirm your calling and election. How do you know God chose you for salvation? Peter is eager to help us confirm our calling and election in this section of Scripture. This is not about earning your calling and election - No one can do that. This is about a life that *confirms* your calling and election.

I love the author of this letter. I look forward to talking to Peter when I get to heaven. We don't have much in common from an earthly perspective. Before Christ called him to be an apostle, Peter fished for a living. I fished a little growing up. When I was a kid my grandmother baited my fishing pole in Austin, Texas in the summers and then took the fish I caught off the hook. She did all the work and I just reeled the fish in. That's humbling to admit publicly. Peter and I don't have much in common in terms of fishing, but we have something more important in common, I think - Both of us want to go to heaven when we die and we want other believers to know how to get from here all the way to heaven.

When you love someone you want what is best for them, right? There is nothing better for someone than to make sure they are on the right spiritual path. **Life on earth is short, eternity is long.** When Peter wrote 2 Peter he knew he was about to die for his faith in Christ. If you look down in your Bible to 2 Peter 1:14, he writes about this. 2 Peter 1:14, "Since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon." That's how Peter described death. Putting off my body. To be absent from the body is to be what - present with the Lord.

Remember Peter had seen the glory of Christ. He was a part of the inner circle that saw Jesus' glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration. He saw the glory of Christ before Jesus died on the cross and after Jesus died on the cross. He was transformed by the glory of Christ and he is about to die and see His Savior face to face. So, what is Peter thinking about in the last stage of his earthly life? I am going to heaven to be with Christ, but I don't want to go alone.

There was an urgency to this letter because if you read 2 Peter 2, you see that false teachers were rampant. False teachers were secretly bringing into the church destructive heresies. They were professional truth twisters. Just as Satan masquerades as an angel of light, these false teachers were slimy. They used the Bible, but they taught it the wrong way. They put question marks where God puts periods. Peter addresses them in chapter 2.

**One of the main truths these false teachers rejected is that salvation in Christ leads to a transformed life.** Peter describes them in chapter 2 as those who deny the master who bought them and then he says that many will follow in their sensuality. This was a main challenge in the early church. **This notion that someone can be saved and not be sanctified.** That someone can be saved by death of Christ and still live in sin that nailed Him to the cross. It's a lie that says someone can be justified and glorified without ever being sanctified.

Progressive sanctification is a big deal. I want to be clear - Peter knows that we are not saved by works. If anyone knew that, it was Peter. Peter knew how sinful he was and that he could not earn salvation. He reminds these believers in 2 Peter 1:1 that the righteousness that we need comes through faith alone in Christ alone. Look how he starts the letter in verse 1, "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."

That's how Peter saw himself and those he wrote this letter to. He wrote this letter to people who did not trust in their own righteousness to be saved. He wrote this letter to people who trusted in the righteousness of Christ for their

salvation. Notice in verse 1 how Peter describes Jesus Christ as both our God and Savior. He's both, right? Jesus Christ is our God who saved us from our sin by providing us with His own perfect righteousness.

To go to heaven when we die, we need perfect righteousness. No one makes a perfect 100 in this room. What we don't have Jesus provides. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, right? At the cross Jesus bore our sins and provides us with His own perfect righteousness. Jesus made a 100 and gives us His righteousness when we hear the gospel and repent and believe. What does obtaining the righteousness of Christ lead to? Grace and peace are multiplied to us according to verse 2 as we grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. **And then in verse 3, Peter takes us by the hand and walks us back through what we have been given by God to grow in Christ.**

Peter's goal in 2 Peter 1:3-11 is to protect us from false teachers and to provide for us a plan for spiritual growth. Let's walk through these verses together under three headings:

1. The power for spiritual growth - 2 Peter 1:3-4

2 Peter 1:3-4

- 3 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,
- 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

These two verses are loaded with spiritual significance. What has God given us to grow in Christ? The divine power of Christ. His in verse 3 refers back to Jesus our Lord at the end of verse 2. **Paul Gardner, "Christ's divine power not only called us to himself, but continues to supply everything that is necessary for us to be the Christians we should be. How good is the Lord whose great and godly power is used to his people's advantage to enable them to live for him!"**

One thing I know is that if I don't think I have the power to do something, I usually don't try to go it or I give up along the way. How many of you are planning to run a marathon this afternoon? Anyone up for a 26.2 mile jog after lunch? Most of us are more inclined to lay down this afternoon than tackle a marathon. Why wouldn't we consider running a marathon this afternoon? Because we know we don't have the power to complete it.

In these two verses Peter takes us by the hand and he reminds us that when we came to know Christ we received God's power, God's precious and very great promises and we escaped the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ***Everything changed when we came to know Christ.*** Knowing what God has already given us in these verses comes before Peter tells us what to do.

Do you see yourself this way this morning? I am a partaker of the divine nature. I have everything I need for life and godliness. I still live in a sin filled society but through the gospel I have escaped it's corruption. Again, if we are going to make spiritual progress, the starting point is to make sure you know what God has already done for you in Christ and given you to live for Christ.

You'll notice in 2 Peter 1:3-4 there are no commands - No roll up your spiritual sleeves and get to work verses. What does Peter write in the next verse? Verse 5? "For this very reason, make every effort." Do you see the connection between what we have and what we pursue? The reason we make every effort to grow in Christ is because of what God has already given us in Christ.

Never forget when you help people to start with salvation. Start with what God has given every believer to mature in Christ. Remind them that God never calls them to pursue something without giving them the power to pursue it. Start with the power of God, the promises of God and the purification that comes from having escaped the pollution that's still in the world.

Next we see in verses 5-7:

## 2. The plan for spiritual growth - 2 Peter 1:5-7

Can I ask you something before we read verses 5-7? I hope so because I'm about to ask it anyway :). How serious are you this morning about doing what God says to grow in Christ? I know there are many things in our lives that we have to do in life. Mom's and dad's and grandma's and grandpa's all have various God given responsibilities. But there is no greater responsibility than seeking to mature in Christ. When you are maturing in Christ you do your responsibilities better for the glory of God.

2 Peter 1:5-7 describes God's plan for spiritual progress. These three verses show us how progressive sanctification fits with the plan of salvation. We grow by adding to our faith these character qualities:

### 2 Peter 1:5-7

- 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue (Moral excellence), 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.

Peter is clear in these verses. Growth in virtue is of utmost importance and demands utmost effort. I love this quote from Charles Spurgeon on 2 Peter 1:5, "People are not saved by their efforts. But, on the other hand, grace saves no one to make him like a log of wood or a block of stone. Grace makes people active. **God has been diligently at work with us; now we must diligently work together with him.** It is not our will that accomplishes our salvation, yet it is not accomplished without our will."

Remember Peter is writing to believers in chapter 1, but he has false teachers in view in chapter 2. This is Peter the shepherd shepherding the flock. These are protection verses for sheep that were coming under attack. What the false

teachers denied is the very thing Peter tells them to make every effort to pursue. These verses describe holiness in our day to day lives.

There's a story told about a golfer named Gary Player. Gary Player was playing in a golf tournament one time in Ft Worth, Texas. He was practicing chipping golf balls onto the green. Every single chip would land on the green and run up right next to the hole. There was a man watching close by the green with a cowboy hat on. He saw what was going on and he started commenting. Every time Gary Player chipped a golf ball close to the hole the man with the cowboy hat would say, "Lucky shot...lucky shot...lucky shot." Finally, Gary Player stopped and looked at the man in the cowboy hat and he said, "You know what? The more I practice the luckier I get."

Have you ever met someone who seemed to be unusually godly? How did they get that way? It's not because they had more power than you or better promises than you. We all have the same power and the same promises. **People who grow in godliness are people who work at it.** Not working for salvation, but working out salvation. How? **By making God's plan for growth their plan for growth.** Effort is involved in spiritual growth. It takes determination. Sanctified sweat.

Have any of you ever run on a treadmill? Have any of you ever fallen off a treadmill because you lost your focus? I have. I was running on a treadmill one time and I lost my focus and took my foot off the treadmill and it didn't go well for me. As we consider this list in verses 5-7 we can't forget verses 3-4 - We pursue this list in order to become more like Christ. He's our focus as we pursue these character qualities.

The word supplement in verse 5 is a word that the original audience would have been familiar with. It means to provide something at one's own expense. To supply lavishly. **Peter is connecting what we know in verses 3-4 and how we grow in verses 5-7.** Notice the list starts with faith in verse 5 and ends with love in verse 7. Let's walk through them briefly together.



The first quality of character Peter lists is *virtue*. It basically means “moral excellence.” It connects back to Christ in verse 3. Who Christ is is who we want to become more like. That’s God’s plan. Have you wondered what God is up to in you’re everyday life? Romans 8:28-29, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” When people come to you with their problems help them see their problems in light of God’s plan. God has a plan. They need to know that and know what it is. Conformity to Christ is God’s plan. Just as Jesus was morally excellent we pursue what He is.

To virtue we add knowledge. It means “full knowledge” or “knowledge that is growing.” It is taking what we know about Christ and putting it into practice. In the context, it refers to the knowledge of Christ. According to one commentator, "Wisdom comes from knowing Christ and adopting His character. Knowledge that is not turned into practical action, that does not produce the character of Christ in one's life, is worth than useless."

Next is self control. It describes the inner strength that deals with passions and cravings the right way. Remember after we are saved we still have this thing called the flesh. The flesh and the spirit are not on good terms. There is a war going on in the heart of the believer. That's why we have to make every effort to pursue self control. Peter is writing to a people living in a hedonistic culture. Self control was not seen as a virtue but a vice. Remember false teachers were given to sensuality even as they taught people about Christ.

It can't be that way with us. Self control is not an option. It's something we are to make every effort to pursue every day in every way. **David Walls, "Self-control describes the inner strength to control one’s desires and cravings. The believer, through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, is not to be a prisoner to any sinful desire or craving."**

Next on the stair stepper of virtues is steadfastness. I love this word. It describes the ability to endure when circumstances are difficult. It means to start something and stick with it. Warren Wiersbe shows us the difference between self control and steadfastness, "Self-control has to do with handling the *pleasures* of life, while patience relates primarily to the *pressures* and *problems* of life. (The ability to endure problem people is "long-suffering.") Often, the person who "gives in" to pleasures is not disciplined enough to handle pressures either, so he "gives up."

If this is starting to sound challenging, there is something important to remember. This is not a to do list that we write out on a post it note and pursue without reliance on Christ. Hebrews 4:14-16, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Jesus persevered through every temptation He faced and He is there to help us persevere through every temptation we face. Trying to handle the problems of life without looking to Christ for the strength we need won't work. He is our pattern, but He is also our great High priest, right? He sympathizes with us from a position of power because He has been where we are and yet He never sinned. He can sympathize with us so much better than we can sympathize with one another because we sympathize from a position of weakness, but He does it from a position of power.

Next is godliness. *Godliness* simply means "God-likeness." In the original Greek, this word meant "to worship well." It described someone who is right in his relationship with the Lord and other people. Warren Wiersbe says that this word describes someone who "lives above the petty things of life, the passions and pressures that control the lives of others. He seeks to do the will of God and, as he does, he seeks the welfare of others."

Next is *Brotherly kindness* (*philadelphia* in the Greek). The night before the cross Jesus issues a new command. John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." If we love Jesus Christ, we must also love those Jesus loves. We will be kind to one another and have our spiritual antenna's up to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the saints.

This list started with faith and finishes with agape love. To mature in Christ we have to make it our goal to do all in love. This is a sacrificial love. If our goal is to become more like Christ, we make every effort to pursue this kind of sacrificial love. This is the love that is described in 1 Corinthians 13, the love that the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts as we walk in the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). Wiersbe says it this way, "When we have *brotherly* love, we love because of our likenesses to others; but with *agape* love, we love in spite of the differences we have."

Do you want to grow in Christ? Here's the plan. It's not a complicated plan, but it does require effort. Take time to consider each of these virtues and think through how you are supplementing your faith with each of these character qualities. Don't aim at nothing. Make this your target.

2 Peter 1:3-4 shows us the power for spiritual progress and 2 Peter 1:5-7 shows us the plan for spiritual progress. If you want to grow in Christ and help other people grow in Christ start with the power and follow the plan.

Next we see:

3. The promise for spiritual progress - 2 Peter 1:9-11

Notice how Peter follows the power and the plan with the promise in verses 9-11:

## 2 Peter 1:9-11

- 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.
- 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.
- 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter starts with a warning in verse 9 for people who have stepped off the spiritual treadmill. Someone who stops making every effort to grow in godliness has forgotten he was cleansed from his former sins. John MacArthur writes, "The failure to diligently pursue spiritual virtues produces spiritual amnesia. Such a person, unable to discern his spiritual condition, will have no confidence about his profession of faith. He may be saved and possess all the blessings of vv. 3, 4, but without the excellencies of vv. 5–7, he will live in doubt and fear."

2 Peter 1:9 is a wake up call to people in the church who are not making every effort to take the power they have and grow up in Christ. 2 Peter 1:10-11 is an encouraging reminder. Peter has his focus in these two verses on the future. He wants us to enter God's eternal kingdom.

## 2 Peter 1:10-11

- 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.
- 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Verse 11 is quite the promise, isn't it? David Walls, "As you begin to see changes and transformations occurring in your life, this should reassure you that God has called you to himself. These changes serve to "make your calling and election sure." The opposite is also true. If your life shows no positive changes and this causes you no concern, then you should wonder and question whether you are a true believer in Jesus Christ. If you respond positively to the challenge, you will find encouragement in the words, **you will never fall**. This does not mean that you will never have a problem or that you will never sin again. The

picture is that of a march, and the point here is that the true believer will never fall out of the march to heaven. You will never be left behind, but you can be assured of a glorious welcome into your eternal home."

How would these verses help someone you meet with who opens up to you about a struggle in their life? They would help you because these verses show us the most important thing in life is not temporal but eternal. This world is not our home. We are headed for what Bunyan called the celestial city. These verses show us the plan to get from here all the way to heaven.

If someone came to me with a spiritual problem I may ask them to meet for a month. Once a week for an hour. I would break 2 Peter 1:1-11. Week 1 I would review their righteousness. Remind them that Christ is their righteousness and Christ is their God who saved them. Week 2 I would review 2 Peter 1:3-4 and talk to them about their power. 2 Peter 1:3-4 is loaded with spiritual significance, especially for people ready to throw in the towel because they feel like they don't have the strength to keep moving forward. Week 3 would be the plan - 2 Peter 1:5-7. Help them get on the spiritual stair-stepper and start moving in the right direction. Week 4 would be the promises of 2 Peter 1:9-11. Help them see that if they do these things they will never fall and they can be confident that heaven awaits.

Throughout this ten week class called Transformed by Truth, our goal has been simple - The Word of God does the work of God. God's Word does God's work. Whatever we go through in life we have the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Whatever we go through in life we need to stop and ask ourselves a basic question, "What does God's Word tell me about this?"

As we learn and live the truth, we glorify God and then we are able to come alongside one another and speak truth in love so that the whole body grows. This is what we want at Cornerstone Bible Church. Every believer doing their part so that our whole body grows to glorify God by becoming more like Christ.