



Is Your Fruit Ripe?

2 Peter 1:1-11



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Main point: A fruitful Christian (one that is not stunted in their growth) is a Christian that is growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, which means they are growing in Christlikeness. And when you are growing in Christlikeness, you can have a full assurance of your salvation, which will be an anchor for you soul in times of conflict and in times of trials and testing, rendering you neither useless nor unfruitful.

Introduction:

If you have been attending bible study for the last few weeks you know that we are in a bible study series on *"Fruitfulness,"* which is our theme for this year (2019). Pastor Knight opened the series by helping us understand that *"Your Root Determines Your Fruit."* In other words, the **fruit** of our lives, or lack thereof, is an indicator of the **source** of our lives. Pastor exegeted the text from Matthew 7:13-20 to help us see this truth more clearly. Elder Ruggles continued the series by helping us understand how fruitfulness is found in Christ from John 15:1-11. In other words, if we do not abide in Christ, we will have no fruit, and therefore we have no life.

This morning we come to the third message in this series and we will consider, *"Fruitfulness in Conflict."* We will be in 2 Peter 1:1-11. And I have chosen to title this message, *"Is your Fruit Ripe?"* Or is your fruit stunted? Have you ever heard the term "stunted mango fruit disorder"? It is characterized by small-sized fruit that has stiffened pulp tissue and failure to ripen at harvest. Do you know any Christians like that? They seem to have stiffened their hearts and, in the process, there does not seem to be much harvest from their lives. They are not being as fruitful as they could be. How does this happen? Well, there could be any number of factors in play. They may never have been a Christian to start with or maybe they are truly born again, but life has just beat them down to the point where it's hard to distinguish them from any non-Christian in the world.

See, if we want to be used of God and be fruitful in our Christian walk, we must be certain of a couple things. First, we must be certain of our calling. If we are not sure of our salvation, we will drift like a boat without an anchor. The process will be slow and probably unnoticed by you, until you look up and you're shipwrecked, miles away from where you are supposed to be. Secondly, we must know some things as it relates to the things of God. Not in some superficial head knowledge way, but in a real deep saving faith way.

You could sum of the main point of my message this morning like this: A fruitful Christian (one that is not stunted in their growth) is a Christian that is growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, which means they are growing in Christlikeness. And when you are growing in Christlikeness, you can have a full assurance of your salvation, which will be an anchor for you soul in times of conflict and in times of trials and testing, rendering you neither useless nor unfruitful.

Context:

Incidentally, this is exactly the context we find here in 2 Peter. Peter is writing his second letter to the beloved. In his first letter—most likely to the same Christians (mostly Gentiles with a mix Jewish believers)—Peter was warning them of dangers from without, which was persecution primarily at the hands of Nero, the ruler of Rome at the time. Nero was one of the harshest antagonists of Christians in the first Century church. So, Peter sought to encourage them by reminding them of the soon return of Christ, that they might hold fast to their faith. But here in 2 Peter, Peter is concerned about the conflict he sees coming from within, yes, right within the church (false teachers). And like the great shepherd that he was, he is stirring these believers to hold fast to what they already know to be true. He was not necessarily seeking to teach them any new doctrine, rather he was wanting them to bring to remembrance what they already had heard and learned.

So, let's look at the text, and then I'll pray a brief prayer and let God's Word speak.

¹ Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have **received a faith** of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His **divine power** has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the **true knowledge** of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the **divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. ⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all **diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**,⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷ and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, **they render you neither useless nor unfruitful** in the **true knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be all the more **diligent** to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

This morning I would like for us to consider three truths about this precious faith, this saving faith, mentioned by Peter and I pray everyone under the sound of my voice, not only **professes** this kind of faith, but truly **possess** it. The first truth is that this faith, this saving faith, is "received" (vv.1-4). Secondly, this a faith that "works"; it's not passive, it's active (vv.5-9). Thirdly it is a faith that "assures" (vv.10-11). It assures that we won't become unfruitful because it is a faith that also endures. Keep this in mind, when we read faith here in these verses what Peter is essentially talking about is our salvation because he is speaking of a saving faith.

Exposition:

A. A Faith Received (vv.1-4)

In his opening greeting to these believers, Peter models for us true servant leadership.

¹ Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.

With great humility, Peter identifies himself as a bond-servant (*doulos*, “slave”). Yet, at the same time he also understands the authority and responsibility given to him by Christ himself as an Apostle. Peter didn’t want these Christians to think his faith was somehow superior to theirs, yet he wanted them to know that what he was telling them was rock solid truth, based on the authority vested in him by Christ Himself.

1. Source (v.1)

The first thing he wants them to understand about this common faith, this saving faith, is its source.

... To those who have **received a faith** of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

The word faith here is probably best understood to mean **subjective** faith as opposed to **objective** faith (like the doctrines of the faith or the teachings of Christianity). Most of you are probably aware that 2 Peter and Jude have very similar themes and styles. Jude talks about a “common” salvation, Peter refers to a “common” faith—same-same. Jude exhorts the people to contend for “the faith” once for all handed down. However here in 2 Peter, Peter does not use the definite article “the” when speaking of faith, so he is most likely speaking of a “subjective faith” that every true believer of the Gospel is called to have.

Both in the Old and New Testaments, faith is the only basis of salvation. Faith is the means by which God’s grace in Christ connects us to himself, saving us from eternal damnation. Ephesians 2:8-9, puts it this way:

- ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift of God**; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Peter says they have received this faith. This faith of the same kind. In other words, their faith was not some second-hand faith or second-class faith. It was of equal value as Peter’s. This faith provides the same saving benefits for you and me just as it did for the apostles long ago. Do you believe this? Not just intellectually, but in your core being?

The apostles did not receive some special faith that is any different than the faith you have if you have been born again. Yes, Peter was an apostle, but he was also a bond-servant (a slave), as I mentioned earlier. All Christians are called to be slaves of Christ, which means Christ is our ultimate Master because He is the ultimate source of this faith we have received. Let me lean on brother Paul to help illustrate this point. Paul, writing to the Roman Christians puts it like this in Romans 3:21-26,

- ²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God **through faith** in Jesus Christ **for all those who**

believe; [in other words for those who trust, who rely on or have faith in Jesus Christ will receive the righteousness of God.]

This word “*believe*” in Romans 3:22, when used of salvation always occurs in the present tense (“is believing”) which stresses that faith is not simply a one-time event, but an on-going condition. This is a really important point, because all too often people get hung up on some profession, they made some time in the past, versus examining their lives to see if they are truly continuing in the faith. Jesus said in John 8:31, “*If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.*”

Or, we go the total opposite way. We have signs of life, we are abiding in His word, but we can’t recall the “specific” day when we first believed, so we doubt our salvation. Either way, we are looking too much at a profession, rather than for possession.

Paul goes on to say,

...for there is **no distinction**; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified **as a gift** by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood **through faith**. This was to demonstrate **His righteousness**, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the **justifier** of the one who has **faith** in Jesus.

The faith that we have received is all God’s doing. If we are going to be saved from eternal damnation and the wrath of God, we are called to believe—to place our full faith in Christ. That’s our responsibility. Every person who has ever live will have to give an account as to if they believed (truly believed) in Christ. But, it is God who gives us this ability to believe. So, Paul reminds us there is no boasting. God is the source of our faith. What a great mystery!

2. Substance (v.2)

We now move from the source of this faith we have received to the substance of it.

² **Grace and peace** be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord;

So, we know the source of our faith God, by the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. We just saw in Romans that this faith justifies us (i.e. it pardons us from the guilt and penalty of sin). Paul, later on in Romans 5:1-2, tells us that this faith gives us peace with God.

- **Romans 5:1**—Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

So, the substance of our faith is Grace and Peace!

Look at verse 2.

- **Romans 5:2**—**Grace and peace** be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord;

That word “*in*” can be translated “*through*.”

Two things: First, Peter says he wants grace and peace to be multiplied and secondly, in order for this to happen we need to have some knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. Here’s the thing, Peter is not just speaking of head knowledge here, like facts about God and Christ. No, the knowledge he is

referring to is *"epignosis"*—that's the Greek word used here. The Greek work for knowledge is *"gnosis"*, but in the Greek language, when you add *"epi"* to a word it intensifies it's meaning. So, knowledge here (*epignosis*) speaks of a deep knowledge. Not some mystical knowledge, but a full, rich, thorough knowledge. John MacArthur says this about this knowledge:

"The substance of one's salvation is this kind of rational, objective knowledge of God through His Word. This fundamental concept of knowing was first of all an Old Testament one. Paul often used the same word in relation to divine truth. The knowledge that brings salvation derives not from feelings, intuition, emotion, or personal experience, but only from the revealed truth, based on the Gospel preached in and from the Word." He goes on to quote Romans 10:17, *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"*. Then he says this...*"Salvation requires a genuine knowledge of the person and work of Jesus Christ. It involves not merely knowing the truth about Him, but actually knowing Him through the truth of His Word."*¹

Peter wrote 2 Peter prior to the full-blown epidemic of Gnosticism in the early church. But Gnosticism—that perversion that taught that you must have some special access to special knowledge to rise to a higher level of Christianity—although it was not known by name at the time of this letter, it is probably what Peter sensed. He sensed the seeds of these heretical teaching starting to take root. Later on in his letter he spends all of Chapter 2 warning of these rising false prophets.

But, is the problem any different today in our day and time? We may not call it Gnosticism today, but preaching sound doctrine is NOT in vogue in most American churches today. People want their ears tickled and they want some new revelation. Come to this conference to learn ten ways to become a better Christian. Buy this book to learn how to effectively deal with what's keeping you from your blessing...and on and on. Anything but the true, unadulterated truth of scripture.

But Peter was determined to remind these believers of the faith they had already received—that the substance of this faith was grace and peace—but he wanted them to know that they needed to press on to know the Lord better. Not only did he want to remind them of the source and the substance of this faith. He also wanted to remind them of the sufficiency of this faith.

3. Sufficiency (vv.3-4)

³ seeing that His **divine power** has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the **true knowledge** of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

These two verses alone demand their own sermon. There is no way I'm going to be able to give them the full treatment they deserve, verse 3 is really the key verse to this section of Scripture. If we would only internalize the truths found in this verse, it would take us to heaven and back again. Christ has granted us everything pertaining for life and godliness. Oh, how we need to understand this truth! This is a staggering truth, church! These verses are chock-full of the glory of Christ. From a theological perspective they are rich in Christology and soteriology.

But let's try to break these verses down just a little bit and peel back just some of the truth found here. Come now, let's see if we can enter in to this truth a little deeper. The first thing we see in the first half of verse 3 is that Christ's divine power provides all we need for life and godliness. That's the main idea, if you will, of these verses. Now, let's not race by that too quickly. As Christians we understand that Christ is God—that's the basis of our faith. But it's not splitting hairs to point out that Peter's use of

¹ John MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary, 2 Peter*

the words, *"His divine power,"* speaks directly to the deity of Christ. If he was speaking of God the Father, he most likely would not have used the word divine because deity is inherent in God's name. So, what Peter is doing is reminding his readers that Christ is God and Christ's divine power (the Greek word for power here is *"dunamis"*), that same power that rose Christ from the dead, has been granted to us that we might live godly lives. Chew on that for just a minute, saints. What this truth calls to mind is what Paul was speaking of in Colossians 2:9-10:

- ⁹ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him **you have been made complete**, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

See, this power is our source for life and godly living. It's this power that has made us complete in Christ. You say, "well, how exactly does that work brother Craig? I don't feel complete." And that's the problem. It's not about how you feel, it's about the truth of His Word! Ok, you're still not convinced. You say, "I understand He has the power to do it, but by what means does He do it?" Well, look at the second half of verse 3.

through the **true knowledge** of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

See, here's that word *"knowledge"* again. The Bible says true knowledge, not true feelings. Peter actually uses the word knowledge 16 times in 2 Peter and he uses the intensified version (*epignosis*) of the word 6 of those 16 times, as he does here. Christ grants us life and godliness through true knowledge of not only who He is, but who we are—sinners, justified by grace. John 17:3 says, *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* How specifically do we come to know Him in this intimate way? He called us! I didn't wake up one morning and say, "you know I think I'm going to follow Christ today." I was going my own way, doing my own thing. I had no thought of Christ! Oh, but when His Word came and showed me his glory and His excellence, it melted my heart. It melted my heart. See, it was the power of His Word that did that, not my intellectual thought about it.

John 16:8-15 says:

- ⁸ And He (speaking of the Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. ¹² I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

When the Holy Spirit comes and sets up residence in your heart, He begins to convict you of sin, righteousness, and judgement (*John 16:8*). These are things that you once just overlooked. By His convictions, you become convinced that Jesus Christ really is LORD, and when you see how your sin is an offense to God, by His spirit you cry out to him as Savior as well. And guess what, this is a gift of God. You cannot go purchase the Holy Spirit. You can't go order Him online somehow. God must give you this gift. This is the power of God.

John Piper says this about this power:

“The Christian faith is not merely a set of doctrines to be accepted. It is a **power** to be experienced. It is a tragic thing to ask people if they know the Lord and have them start listing the things they believe about the Lord. Brothers and sisters, believing things about Jesus Christ will save no one. The devils are the most orthodox believers under heaven. It is **divine power** that saves. If the **power** of God does not flow into your life and make you godly you are not Christ's. ‘All who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God’ (Rom.8:14). The mark of sonship is **divine power**. And the mark of **power** is **godliness**; which means a love for the things of God and a walk in the ways of God.”²

Well, like I said I could spend the entire sermon on just these two verses, but I must move along. So, I’ll just touch lightly on verse 4.

⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the **divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

What are the “*these*”? Christ’s glory and His excellence. Why? So that we might partake of His divine nature. In other words that we may walk in newness of life.

So, we have just considered this faith we have received. We saw its source (God and our Savior Jesus Christ). We saw its substance (grace and peace) and we saw its sufficiency (it has the power to grant life and godliness). But this is also a faith that works, which is our next point beginning in verse 5.

B. A Faith that works (vv.5-9)

⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all **diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**,⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,⁷ and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, **they render you neither useless nor unfruitful** in the **true knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

I like how Don Anderson sums up these first 11 verses in 2 Peter. He sees two broad themes here. Theme number one could be labeled: **Here’s what you have (vv.1-4)**—God’s Part: Power and Promise. Theme number two could be labeled: **Here’s what you do (vv.5-11)**—Our Part: Faith and Diligence. So, we now come to theme two of this section.

We are asking the question, “*Is Your Fruit Ripe?*” Or is it stunted? Do you have the stunted mango disorder? Is your fruit a small-size, hardened pulp or is it a plump and juicy fruit, useful for eating? Do you have any fruit at all?

We just looked at what God has already given us, but when it comes to how the Christian can be assured that they are living fruitful lives, verses 5 through 9 give the prescription or antidote against the warning we find not only here from Peter but also in James 2:17. James says that faith being by itself is dead or useless. He even says that it is not enough just to believe (i.e. have some head knowledge or facts about God). Demons are first rank theologians, you know? They know some stuff, but they do not put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

² John Piper, Sermon, *Liberating Promises*, 2 Peter 1:1-4

I said earlier that we must be careful not to lean too much on a past profession, but rather we need to look for a current possession—a current possession of fruit in our lives. Well, how do we do that exactly? These verses (5-9) help us calibrate our lives to Christ's standard, for Peter says this is the very reason we have received His "divine nature." That's what he's explaining in the first half of verse 5.

⁵ *Now for this very reason also...* He is saying because we have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness, we have been given these precious and magnificent promises, and have received a new, divine nature we must now diligently work out this salvation in very practical ways, not to be saved, but because we are saved! Paul told the Philippians in Philippians 2:12-13 to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**"

This is where the rubber meets the road, church. If we do not understand this principle, we are going to have much confusion, doubt, and defeat in our Christian walk. Listen to what Jerry Bridges says:

"Self-reliance toward God is a dependence on our own power, not the power of the Holy Spirit....Self-reliance is the opposite of dependence on the Holy Spirit's power for sanctification. Just as by nature we assume we earn our salvation by our good works, so by nature we assume we grow spiritually by our own effort and willpower. What's wrong with this kind of self-reliance? Everything. First of all, it doesn't work. The Christian life is a spiritual life lived in a spiritual world. Our human strength, be it physical power or willpower, is inadequate. We need divine strength that comes from a divine source—the Spirit of God. When we attempt to live the Christian life in our own strength, we head in the direction of legalism, pride, frustration, or ungodly living. It can even lead to a shipwrecked faith...Furthermore, if we perceive we've succeeded on our own, in our arrogance we'll boast, take the credit, and steal the glory....We need to admit that self-reliance is a subtle and insidious enemy of our souls...With one breath we express awareness that we're dependent on God for everything, and with the next breath we express self-reliance."³

Is this not what we have been seeing in this passage? God is the source of our salvation, it's His power at work in us, and it is sufficient to make us fruitful. Yet, we see that we have a role to play. We need to cultivate this fruit in our lives, but we can only do it by the strength and power that He supplies!

Now, I'm going to lean on my mango stunted fruit disorder illustration one last time to make a point. I described to you earlier the disorder, but what I did not share with you was that the horticultural community also has a way to treat that disorder, to allow that fruit to eventually be useful. I'll spare you all the details of that, but I will give you the details to how you and I can make sure we are useful and fruitful. So, let's look at God's Word and let it teach us.

Again, let's look at verse 5 together.

⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all **diligence** [in other words, call on all your regenerated faculties not your own strength], in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**.

Some versions translate the words "in your faith" there in verse 5 as "add to your faith" or "supplement your faith." In other words, you need to build on to this foundational element of your salvation. Jesus said, "in my Father's house are many mansions (John 14:2, KJV). I don't read where He said there are many foundations. So, we must build on this foundation of faith. And we must do diligently and urgently. That means with haste. Why? Because we do not know when He may return. Isn't that what we have been learning the last few weeks in Matthew? We want to be found abounding in good works.

³ Jerry, Bridges, preceptaustin.org, *Commentary on 2 Peter 1:1-11*

So, let's just briefly look at a couple of these characteristics that with the help of the Holy Spirit we need to make sure we are adding to our faith. We don't have time to go into a deep word study on each of these words, so I will just touch lightly on a couple of them and make some observations about the others.

But what we need to understand here is that these are characteristics we should be on the look-out for in our lives. It doesn't mean that we arrive at perfection in any one of them and then we move on to the next. No. Rather, as we grow in virtue, it leads to our growing in knowledge, and as we grow in knowledge we grow in self-control, and as we grow in self-control, we grow in perseverance, etc. etc. Ultimately growing more in our love not only for Christ but for one another. And when we fall short in any of these areas, our attitude should be that of one walking in "repentance and faith". Oh Lord I fell short in this area, show me by Your Word how to apply the truth or Your Word to that situation. And as we do that we continue to grow spiritually.

Moral Excellence (virtue)

... *in your faith supply moral excellence.*

The first characteristic we see is "*moral excellence*" or goodness or virtue. This word, "*virtue*" is derived from the Greek word *arete*. "*Arete*" came to mean quality of life which made someone, or something stand out as excellent. When anything in nature properly fulfills its purpose, that fulfillment was referred to as "*virtue*" or "*moral excellence*." For example, land that produces crops is "excellent" because it is fulfilling its purpose. It's thought to be "excellent" land. So, when the Christian adds virtue to their faith, they are starting to fulfil the purpose for which we were saved.

Knowledge

... *and in your moral excellence, knowledge.*

Next, we see knowledge. We saw earlier that knowledge comes from the Greek word "*gnosis*". Here, Peter does not use the intense version for knowledge (*epignosis*), but this knowledge is an experiential knowledge, not just a passing knowledge. It means to be intimately acquainted. "*Gnosis*" is understanding (correct insight) truth, properly comprehended and applied. Jesus said in John 7:17 "*If any man is willing to do His will, he shall **know** [ginosko] of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.*" As the Christian adds properly applied truth of God to his excellent moral character, he or she will continue to grow deeper spiritual roots in the ground of sanctification.

Mark De Haan tells the story of a student who was interested in finding out all he could about religion. When De Haan asked him why? The student said he wanted to expand his education. He wanted to know what made religious people tick, but he himself had no desire to know God or to do His will. Then De Haan asks this penetrating question, "*Is it possible that we as Christians are like that? Do we have a desire to learn more about the Bible for reasons other than to know God better and to live as He wants us to?*" He goes on to say... "*The apostle Peter said we should be increasing our understanding for one primary purpose—to bring our faith to maturity. He pointed out that knowledge is an indispensable element in the process that leads to self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. This progression toward maturity results in knowing Jesus Christ in a deeply personal way. God doesn't ask us to increase our knowledge for the sake of knowledge. He asks us to increase our understanding so that we can grow into God-centered, loving, productive people. That's why we should want to know.*"⁴

⁴ Mark De Haan, preceptaustion.org, *Commentary on 2 Peter 1:1-1*

So, I think we can see the progression. I won't go into detail for each of the remaining four characteristics, but it's culmination in love is an important point to highlight.

Love

... and in your brotherly kindness, love

When Jesus was asked by the Lawyer (a Pharisee) what was the greatest commandment, what did he say?

- **Matthew 22:37-40**—'You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹The second is like it, 'You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

Love is the goal. When we are loving the way God calls us to love it provides great benefit not only to ourselves spiritually, but to the entire body of Christ and even the dying world around us. Again, when the supposed teacher of the Law asked Jesus, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" What did Jesus tell him in Luke 10:25-29?

- **Luke 10:25-29**—And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" ²⁷And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." ²⁹But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

How did Jesus answer his question? He gave the parable of the Good Samaritan, right? And who was it that Jesus revealed to be his neighbor? It was the one who showed mercy toward the one who had been robbed.

Our faith works! It's not a dead faith, if you've been truly born again. This is what faith looks like in the life of a born-again Christian. I used that term (born-again) deliberately, because it should be obvious by now that Peter is speaking in reference to born-again believers. If you are not born-again you will just be frustrated with these verses, because your old, fallen flesh cannot be redeemed. You must have a new nature. You must be born-again.

You hear the terms "*taking off*" and "*putting on*" often in Christian circles. Taking off the old self and putting on the new self or new nature. Well, if you don't have a new self, a new nature, and try to carry out these commands, you will just be putting sanctified garments on a rotting corpse. You might fool the world, but you won't fool God! So, let's just be clear about that. Spiritual growth can only be accompanied by those born of the Spirit. That's exactly what Peter is driving at in our closing verses (10-11), which brings us to our third and final point.

C. A Faith that Assures (vv.10-11)

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be all the more **diligent** to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

As good bible students we know that we need to ask the question why the "*therefore*" at the beginning of verse 10, right? What is the therefore there for? The driving aim of Peter in 2 Peter was to stir these

believers up by way of reminder. He was not trying to teach them new doctrine; he just wanted them to remember what they already knew. Time and again, Peter uses the word *"Therefore"* and the words *"For this very reason."* It is obvious that Peter wanted to remind them of something. And what is it that he wanted to remind them of? He wanted to remind them of their provisions, their promises, and their potential.

- Their provisions: everything pertaining to life and godliness
- Their promises: that they had been called by Christ's glory and excellence
- Their potential: as partakers of a divine nature.

Because of these things, Peter says be all the more diligent to make certain you are part of the elect. Why? Well, in this verse and the next Peter gives the two results of spiritual growth, the first relating to this present life (assurance of salvation) and the second to the future (abundant entrance into God's eternal kingdom).

If you want to have assurance of your salvation and thereby an assurance of entrance into God's eternal kingdom, you must be diligent to look in to these things as it relates to the realities of fruit in your life. You can't be slothful in this area and just assume you're all good, because of the warning we see in Matthew 7:21:

- Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

We have to remember the context of this letter. Peter was writing to believers who have been under severe persecution and no doubt many who had initially professed a belief in Jesus had wandered from the faith. Now, false teachers were coming on the scene and distorting the truth of God. So, there was much conflict in the lives of these believers just as it is with us today.

But don't listen to these false teachers who say you don't have to strive for holiness because, "God knows your heart", and who teach other heretical things like it's all the amount of your giving or that you have to have some other higher experience or second blessing from God that proves you are truly born-again. On one hand, they are correct; God does know your heart. And if there is not a practice of holiness in your life you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. And if you are born-again, no one will have to prod you to be generous.

Let's be clear, this teaching is not about achieving perfection. Rather it's about growing and practicing Christian virtues.

Remember, I said that a fruitful Christian is a Christian that is growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, which means they are growing in Christlikeness. And when you are growing in Christlikeness, you can have a full assurance of your salvation. The question for you and me today is: are we growing in Christlikeness? If so, praise God, we can have full assurance that He who began a work in us will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus (*Phil. 1:6*).

If not, cry out to Him today and ask Him to save you. For Romans 10:8-10 says:

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Cry out to Him today that you might have this “same kind of faith”. A faith that is received, a faith that works, and a faith that assures. Let’s pray.

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