

Series: **Transforming Faith** – week 8

CDOBC – beginning on 7/3/16

Today's Title: **“A Gold Medal Faith”**

August 21, 2016 ~ 2 Peter 1:8-11

OBJECTIVE: To help people commit to add these 7 qualities to their faith so they will be effective and fruitful for Christ.

Opening Prayer

Turn in your bible to **2 Peter 1:8-11**- A “Gold Medal Faith”

Today is the final sermon in this series - and next Sunday we will continue our study of 2 Peter in a series titled: “A Firm Foundation”.

As most of you know I love sports.

I don't just love a few different sports - I really enjoy the competition and the drama of sport.

This is why I love to watch the Olympics.

The competition is awesome, but I also enjoy the story behind the athletes. The sacrifice and dedication many athletes endure to live their Olympic dream is inspiring and a great achievement beyond the medals.

But winning a gold medal is the ultimate goal of each athlete.

Can you imagine an Olympics without the medals?

I know some of you can - because some of you are familiar with kids sports teams that don't keep score - where everyone receives a participation trophy. They were on the

team - so they receive a trophy - as if the purpose was simply to assemble a team!

This thinking really misses the point doesn't it...because a major part of sports is the competition - winning the gold medal.

This reality extends beyond sports.

In school you are graded on your work - and you strive to get an "A". You're not rewarded for simply being in class.

At work you do your best so you can get the sale - earn a raise - get noticed for being a hard and capable worker. Just showing up and sitting at your desk is not what the job is about.

What about your faith in Christ?

In every other area of life, you probably reject the '*everybody gets a trophy*' mentality - at school and at work you're fully aware just showing up is not the point...but what about your faith in Christ? Is showing up at church enough?

Is being on the "Christian team" the entire purpose...or is there more to it?

Isn't it important to say with confidence and assurance: '*My faith makes a difference in my life...and in the life of people I know.*'

Shouldn't our faith impact more than our own life?

Shouldn't our faith be effective in expanding the Kingdom of God and strengthening the Kingdom of God?

The Apostle Peter - under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - commands us to do more than just wear the Christian label - he says we must supplement our faith with character qualities which will move us toward maturity and spiritual effectiveness - these things will help us achieve *Gold Medal Faith*. Over the past 6 weeks we've studied these qualities - now the Apostle says in vs. 8 of chapter 1:

“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.

A prescription for effective and fruitful faith. vs. 8

Peter takes the negative in this verse by telling us how to avoid being ineffective and unfruitful - I want to turn it into a positive statement so we can clearly understand what we need to do in order to grow and be effective and fruitful.

So... let's take this verse in it's various pieces / phrases.

“For if these qualities are yours and are increasing”

“if” - Let's revisit our grammar lessons from years ago, and we are reminded that the word “if” is *a conjunction introducing a condition where the question of fulfillment or non-fulfillment is left open.* (Oxford English Dictionary)

So what Peter is saying here in vs. 8 is not automatic for each Christian - the condition of being effective and fruitful is dependent on each of us doing something.

In this case, it's dependent on each of us adding these 7 qualities to our faith.

"If" we do that - notice this is not a one-time thing...it's something that continues on and we need to increase the purity and depth of these qualities in our life if we want to be effective and fruitful.

The Christian faith is not an easy life or a life where we just coast and chill every day until Jesus returns or we die.

So... have you added to your faith: virtue/goodness, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, Godliness, brotherly kindness and love?

If you have...keep working to deepen these qualities in your life and you will be effective and fruitful.

If you have not, then you will be a frustrated Christian who sees no benefit or impact in this life of your faith.

But what does it mean to be effective and fruitful "in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."?

The phrase "in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" simply means our knowledge of the Gospel and all Christ has done and taught. It speaks to our salvation.

We can paraphrase Peter's statement:

If these qualities are yours and they are increasing, your salvation will be effective and fruitful.

On the contrary, our salvation will be powerless to impact our life now or the people in our life - unless we supplement our faith with a transformed life - and these 7 qualities Peter lists in vs. 5-7 are a great starting point for us.

So are you a Christian living in hopes of a participation trophy?

Or... are you a Christian living with the desire to add to your faith the qualities Peter lists and are you a Christian who wants to be effective and fruitful in your faith?

A Christian who wants a Gold Medal kind of faith!

A Christian with spiritual disabilities vs. 9

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

This is a statement about the quality, joy and spiritual awareness you have in life.

If it was up to you, would you choose to be disabled in some way?

Would you gouge out your eyes so you could be blind?

Would you somehow ruin your ability to hear?

Would you cut off a limb?

No, we wouldn't do that.

We know in this life, those with disabilities are amazing people - they do amazing things - their dedication and strong nature inspire all of us.

But their life is much more difficult in many ways - and the point Peter is making is not a derogatory comment or view toward those who are disabled, but a common sense statement about the limitations of blindness.

If you are a Christian and you refuse to supplement your faith with these qualities, you are choosing to be spiritually blind.

In a physical sense, someone who is “nearsighted” is not blind.

Someone who is “nearsighted” is unable to see things clearly unless the object is very close to them.

Spiritual nearsightedness is when you only concern yourself with the things of this world. Things which are close to you - things which are obvious and tangible.

Spiritual nearsightedness means you ignore / can't see the future promises of God. The only things in focus to you are things of the flesh - and spiritual truth is distant and blurry.

This is spiritual blindness to the reality and power of God.

This person cannot see the beauty of a transformed life. In fact, Peter says they are not only spiritually blind, but they have amnesia as well. The wonder and joy of their sins being forgiven are so distant in their memory they are “forgotten”.

If you lack these 7 qualities in your life, you won't have Christian joy.

You won't see the benefit and blessing of self-control, the power of being steadfast in the faith and the richness of a godly heart.

You'll be so blind to spiritual things that you will forget the most amazing miracle in your own life - the miracle of God's grace and His forgiveness of your sins.

When you sing of His grace your heart will be unmoved - in fact, you might not even sing. After all, why should you sing? What does singing about this stuff have to do with your life? Your spiritual nearsightedness will blind you to all the realities and joys of being a Christian.

Be a Christian with confidence vs. 10

10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

Notice he begins with "brothers". It's clear in vs. 1-2 that Peter is writing this letter to Christians - and the term "brothers" reminds us again of that fact. This is important because some interpret the last phrase of this verse as a reference to hell. I disagree with that interpretation - and the primary reason is Peter is writing to believers and the teaching of Scripture is that believers don't lose their place in God's family. (John 10:28-30; Romans 8:29-30)

“be all the more diligent” - in the Greek this is the verb form of the noun used in vs. 5 (“make every effort”)

Confidence in your faith is not automatic.

Over the years I have talked with many who have faith in Christ, but they are uncertain of their faith.

They’re not *assured* they have saving faith.

“make your calling and election sure”

This is not about earning your salvation - it’s about being confident or assured in the reality of your salvation.

Just because you prayed a prayer or repeated certain words doesn’t mean you have faith.

Romans 10 says you must believe the gospel in your heart and confess with your mouth (10:10). This indicates more than a recitation of words or the ritual of walking an aisle.

But how do you know if you have been saved?

You know by a changed and transformed heart and life.

That’s why Peter points us to the “practice” of “these qualities”. Remember, the 7 qualities are a mix of external behaviors and heart attitudes/belief. The assurance of your faith is a life that is being transformed into the image of Christ.

A Christian still sins - but is there a struggle against sin?

When you sin, does the Holy Spirit convict you of the sin and do you repent?

Is there a change in your heart?

Security and assurance are different. Related...but different.

Our security is in the finished work of Christ.

I'm secure in the facts of Jesus - His sinless life, His death, burial and resurrection.

I'm secure because of Jesus - what He did and what He promises.

I'm assured / confident of my salvation by the evidence of God's work of transformation in my life.

"The confirmation of your election is your progress in sanctification. God predestined all the elect to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Therefore, the reassuring evidence of our election is Christ-likeness."

John Piper - sermon titled, "Confirm Your Election"

1 John 3:14

"We *know* that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."

1 John 2:28

"And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears *we may have confidence* and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming."

The last part of vs. 10 says "if you practice these qualities you will never fall."

Peter is telling us how to avoid falling into sin - how to avoid falling into a life which is ineffective and fruitless.

Jude 24

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling...”

This is not a warning that you can lose your salvation - it's a warning that if you stop practicing these qualities, your Christian life will be ineffective and will bear no fruit.

A hero's welcome awaits you in heaven...if *vs. 11*

For the athlete, their family and coaches, the medal ceremony is a memory they will have for life. It's often a very emotional few minutes as the years of practice and sacrifice culminate in receiving a priceless reward for their work.

Since sports is the national religion in our country, the baseball, football or basketball team who wins the championship is given a victory parade down the streets of their city and teams are now routinely invited to the White House.

Do you realize the faithful believer will receive a hero's welcome in heaven?

A victory celebration for those who run the race well and run it to completion!

“For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

New Living Translation - “Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

“For in this way” - meaning adding these 7 things to your faith - meaning if you are assured in your calling and election because your life is being transformed by God - if you live your life “in this way” - you will be welcomed “into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (heaven!!!).

How would you like to enter heaven?

Now you might say no matter how you enter heaven it’s a bit like the saying *any airplane landing you walk away from is a good landing.*

But that misses the point and fails to understand the relationship we have with Jesus.

I want the victory parade and the cheers.

I want to feel excitement when I cross the threshold.

Think of the battleship which returns from war and the ship has been severely damaged - so damaged it has to be towed into the harbor by a team of tugboats.

There is smoke coming out from multiple places where the enemy’s attacks tore holes in the metal.

The sailors are not standing at the rail in their dress whites waving to those welcoming them home - they are limping and bandaged - some have an arm in a sling - others have their head bandaged - others are on crutches and many others are too injured to walk.

The ship is listing badly to the port side - the metal creaking and popping as it is moved slowly through the water.

There's not much of a celebration...there is relief.

There's great sadness due to the pain and losses incurred in the battles.

The sailors are not greeted with "Great job!" or "Well done!"

Instead, their loved ones say things like: "I'm so glad you made it home."

"I was so worried I wouldn't see you."

"It's a miracle of God's grace that you made it!"

Paul tells Timothy the danger of ignoring or rejecting the call to grow and cultivate one's faith in Christ.

1 Timothy 1:19

"By rejecting this (their faith & conscience), some have made shipwreck of their faith..."

He wrote to the church in Corinth about wasting this life on material things instead of eternal things...

1 Corinthians 3:15

"If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."

It is true - a landing you walk away from is a good one...and making it to heaven in whatever condition is a good thing.

But I want the parade.

I want the "Well done good and faithful servant!!"

“Great job!”

“For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

This doesn't happen by accident - it happens because you are “diligent” and you “...make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love.”

Apply it...

Strive for Gold Medal Faith

If you do these things, you will be effective and fruitful for the cause of Christ and you will have a Gold Medal Faith!

If you don't add these 7 traits or other Christ-like traits to your faith, you will miss the blessing and power of Christ in your life now - and you'll be ineffective and unfruitful.

Be diligent and confident in your faith

The Christian life takes work. We're not talking about justification - we're not talking about working to earn the forgiveness of Christ - we're talking about growing in your faith and the process of becoming more Christ-like.

This is hard work (“be diligent”, “make every effort”), but the blessing is not only will you be effective and fruitful - but you will have great confidence in your faith!

Say “no” to participation trophy Christianity.
Say “yes” to Gold Medal Faith!

Close in prayer