

Supplementing Our Faith (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Three weeks ago, we started covering 2 Peter 1, verses 5-15, and those verses build on verses 3 and 4.

! So we'll do some quick review of those verses to get started tonight. Verses 3 and 4 said, 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, 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.

Peter desired that all of God's people should be kept from doubt and despair by standing on the promises of Christ their Lord. And out of gratitude, these people are now to live victorious Christian lives in a difficult world through the power of the Holy Spirit, and we're to do that as a testimony of God's love.

Verses 5-15 summarize how to live and a little bit on how not to live victorious Christian lives because we are partakers of the divine nature. So with that in mind, let's read verses 5-15 again. Starting in verse 5, it says, For whoever lacks these qualities is so near-sighted that he is not going to be able to live in the world. Verse 6-15 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.

[2 : 03] For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it is right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able to recall at any time these things. So remember that Paul wrote this letter to believers.

And in tonight's passage, Peter has two purposes. First, he tells believers how they can have assurance that they are saved. In other words, how they can possess the precious and very great promises that we've just spent some time reviewing.

And second, he explains to them why he continually reminds them about the qualities that provide assurance. In our previous 2 Peter lesson, we talked about the difference between eternal security and assurance.

[3 : 16] The doctrine of eternal security or preservation or perseverance of the saints is the spirit-revealed objective fact that salvation is forever.

And assurance is believers' spirit-given subjective confidence that they truly possess that eternal salvation. So even if you don't have assurance of your salvation, if you're a true believer, that doesn't change the fact that your salvation is eternally secure.

But assurance can come and go. All true believers have that eternal security. And that's one of the precious and very great promises that Peter summarized in verse 4.

But as we just talked about, some believers lack the assurance that they actually possess that salvation. The first several verses we will study tonight continue to focus on helping believers have the assurance that they really are saved.

Also in our previous 2 Peter study, we made it through verse 8 of this passage. And in verses 5 through 8, Peter talked about the fruitful. I even gave you that blank as a bonus tonight since you filled it out the last time we had 2 Peter.

[4 : 27] And the fruitful believers have every reason to be assured of their salvation. And these verses describe in more specific terms what participating in the divine nature should look like.

Such participation exhorts us to make every effort to change our lives. Verses 3 and 4 lay out the incredible gift of God in allowing His power and His Spirit to be part of the believer's life as a divine helper in the process of transformation.

Then verses 5 through 7 show that each believer also has a role to play in the transformation. A resolve, a desire, and a commitment to growth and effective transformation must be a part of the individual believer's life if the Holy Spirit is to be effective.

The characteristics in verses 5 through 7 describe in overview the nature of excellence of godly living that's talked about in verse 3. Believers are asked to supplement their faith.

And Peter assumes that his readers already have experienced salvation because these characteristics of godliness can only be obtained by saved people. And verses 5 through 7 show a progression and we summarize that progression like this.

[5 : 39] Faith is the root of all moral virtue and such virtue is linked with what we do with our knowledge of God. And if we use this knowledge of God well, we will exercise self-control.

The self-control will give us the ability to steadfastly endure difficulties and the steadfastness will then lead to godliness in our relationships and these relationships will be governed by brotherly affection and then Christian love.

Verse 8 gave us the results of exhibiting these qualities and it said, 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.

So with that review, we're ready for a new material and the second main point of verses 5 through 15. In the second section, which covers just one verse, Peter draws a contrast between the fruitful and another type of person.

In verse 9, we see the forgetful. So the forgetful is what we see next. And verse 9 says, For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

[6 : 52] God certainly doesn't want his children miserable and doubting his gift of salvation. Instead, he desires and delights in their joy and confidence.

And if Christians are to fully enjoy their assurance as God desires for them, they must consider one of the two options that Peter presents in this passage and choose the positive one that we saw in verses 5 through 8.

Verse 9, though, has the negative alternative. And the believer who's not experiencing an increase in the virtues that we saw in verses 5 through 8 will forfeit assurance.

Such a believer's sin makes him unable to be confident that he was cleansed and rescued from his former life. And once again, if he's a true believer, he is saved, but he doesn't have the confidence that he's saved because he can't be certain he's been truly saved if he doesn't see an increase of virtue and usefulness in his life.

So in other words, he was once blind before salvation, and then he was made to see, but then he can also experience a kind of spiritual blindness again if he doesn't continue to grow in his Christian life.

[8 : 03] So this lack of spiritual growth results in a dysfunctional believer. And dysfunctional believers have a vision problem. That's what Peter is really saying here.

You know, myopia is a condition where we can't see far off with our eyes. And so spiritually nearsighted people have a problem as well because spiritual nearsighted people can't see eternity. So they may have a sharp vision for this life in business and other things, but they don't see eternity well. And those afflicted with spiritual nearsightedness become more interested in earthly things than in heavenly things.

Dysfunctional believers not only have a vision problem, though, they also have a memory problem, and that's spiritual forgetfulness. They forget that their sins were purged, and they doubt their salvation.

They often act like a person who needs to be saved because the sins are still dominant in their life. And spiritual growth is necessary for a believer to act like a believer, and a dysfunctional spiritual life also dishonors God.

[9 : 14] The nearsighted person in the sense that Peter is using the word here is no doubt one who's lost all sense of the wonderful promises of God that we talked about earlier. The person can't see beyond today, and he forgets that Christians are moving toward an eternal goal.

He's not only able to see the way ahead, but he also has forgotten that he's been cleansed from his past sins. That really is a sobering challenge to all of us because as we fail to grow in Christ, we not only become unproductive and lazy and ineffective as Christians, but we also are saying, in effect, by our actions that forgiveness no longer matters to me.

You know, sometimes it really is easy to forget how much what God did for us really matters and how much and how important that forgiveness is. And if we forget what God has done for us, we won't be excited to share Christ with other people.

We need to remember that through the blood of Jesus, we've been purged and forgiven. God's opened our eyes so we don't have to be nearsighted anymore. We have no reason to forget what he's done for us.

Instead, we need to cultivate gratitude in our hearts and sharpen our spiritual vision. That's because life is too brief and the needs of the world are too great for God's people to be walking around with their eyes closed.

[10:37] And that's really what Peter is saying here. If we really don't think about how we've been saved and we forget that, it's the equivalent of walking around with our eyes closed and only seeing part of the things that we could see.

But not only does spiritual forgetfulness cause the believer to be ineffective in reaching others, the forgetfulness has an effect on the believer's own life as well because that kind of spiritual forgetfulness leads to repeating old sins and it robs Christians of their assurance because assurance of salvation is directly related to spiritual service and obedience.

That last part is important, so hear that one more time. Assurance of salvation directly is related to spiritual service and obedience. And Paul knows how important spiritual service and obedience are, and so in the next section of the passage, Peter calls on believers to confirm their status as believers.

In verses 10 and 11, Paul urges us to be confident about the foundation. So the foundation is what goes in your next blank. And our calling and election form the solid foundation that will allow us to be confident in our fruitfulness.

And that same foundation also will give us assurance. So listen to verses 10 and 11 one more time. Peter wrote, Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.

[12:13] For in this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So if we grow in the Christlike virtues mentioned in 2 Peter 1, 5-7, we'll have increasing confidence that God really did call them and really did elect them to salvation before the foundation of the world.

In other words, their election becomes sure as a sure foundation. So the reference to calling and election highlights God's grace. He's the one who saves, and we know that, of course, but the emphasis here is not on what God has done, but on the responsibility of human beings because believers are to make their calling and election sure.

So Peter's really giving a short sermon here, and as he nears the end of this sermon and summarizes his teaching, he does what every preacher does toward the end of a sermon. He tries to make the application explicit.

And what he's saying is that because of what has been said, it's vital that Christian men and women to whom Peter is writing be all the more eager. Peter uses the verb form of a word used back in verse 5.

It was also translated, make every effort there. And this, again, is the thrust of Peter's message here. He's saying that the Christians in the churches must really work at their Christian faith.

[13:38] So many Christians treat their Christian faith as a spectator sport. You know, it hardly relates, if at all, to their daily life. And at best, it's something that involves them from the armchair at the end of a day or at the start of a busy day when they offer up a short prayer.

Peter's adamant, though, that there can be no armchair Christians. He says there can be no armchair Christians in effect here because we have to be eager to make our calling and election sure.

We need to talk just a little bit about calling and election. Listen to what Charles Spurgeon has to say about these terms. He said, Calling here is the special call, which we call the effectual call, whereby God secretly, in the use of means, by the irresistible power of His Holy Spirit, calls out of mankind a certain number whom He Himself has before elected, calling them from their sins to

become righteous, from their death and trespasses and sins to become living spiritual men, and from their worldly pursuits to become lovers of Jesus Christ.

The other important term is election, and as without calling there is no salvation, so without election there is no calling. And Holy Scripture teaches us that God has from the beginning chosen us who are saved unto holiness through Jesus Christ.

We're told that as many as ordained into eternal life to believe are saved and that their believing is the effect of their being ordained to eternal life from before the world began.

[15:16] So we know from Scripture that people are elected to salvation before they're called, but Peter lists the words in opposite order. He says that we should be diligent to make our calling and election sure.

So let's think about why he would list them in reverse order from what God did. Well, the reason is he's looking at it from the people's perspective, because even though we were chosen before the foundation of the world, to us, our calling came first.

We didn't know we were elected for salvation until God called us, and so that's the first thing you and I can know, and that's our calling. So we don't know that we're elect until we know that we're called, so we must prove our calling, and then our calling proves our election and shows that our election is sure.

So the two words, though, are really closely related, and they both refer entirely to the gracious work of the Savior in drawing Christians to himself. Initially, this verse seems almost like a contradiction in terms, and we talked about a similar problem when we looked at verse 5 three weeks ago, because how does our work make certain something that's already certain because of God's gracious activity before the world began?

Well, Peter's sermon here began by reminding us of Christ's provision, and that's the divine power that has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ.

[16:44] True Christians will be seeking to respond appropriately from their heart to the grace and love of God, because that law is now written on our hearts. Peter's reminding us in very stark terms that if we are recipients of God's grace, then we should live lives that are expected of the elect.

Ultimately, of course, if a Christian has no desire to follow the life of obedience or to develop his or her life, the moral virtues of which Peter's been talking about in the verses before this, then the Christian will fall.

And there's a response required of all who truly know and love the Lord Jesus, and if that response is missing, then ultimate judgment awaits. So theologically, and then based upon an understanding of God's grace in the life of a believer, we would be right to say that no one who is truly called an elect will ever fall in this final way.

But that's not what Peter is talking about here. What Peter's concerned about here is to ensure that all Christians examine themselves. They must ensure that they really do believe and trust Christ for everything.

But here's where Peter really gets adamant. He says, if they belong to Christ, then their Christian growth toward holiness and godliness is vital, and they'll be held accountable for that.

[18:05] Notice that Peter says that true believers practice these qualities, and that's the qualities we talked about in verses 5 through 7. And practice refers to the pattern of daily conduct.

We need to be careful and make sure we emphasize that Peter's not implying that Christians will be perfect this side of eternity. He's not saying that we'll never fail or that we'll always be fully self-controlled and always full of brotherly love, but he's saying that sure, in certain Christian life we'll have us working toward these virtues continually.

In other words, that'll be the pattern of our lives. We may slip occasionally, but we'll keep coming back to the overall pattern. Christians can't do it on their own, but the spirit within them will be driving all true believers toward the goal of a holy life.

And that's how it relates back to the verses we looked at in review, because we know that Christ has given us everything we need for life and godliness. So the Christian who's sure of his election and calling will never fall, but will prove it instead by having a consistent life, and that will show that he truly is a child of God.

We know that we won't always be on the mountaintop, but we should always be climbing higher, at least in the general direction of things. And if we do the things listed in verses 5 through 7, and if we display Christian growth and character in our daily lives, then we can be sure that we're converted and will one day be in heaven.

[19 : 38] But Peter's message gets even better from there. In verse 11, Peter says, we won't just be in heaven. He says these words. Verse 11 says, for in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

assurance of having entered into the eternal kingdom is the experience of a Christian who practices what Peter's listed. And that should have been a great encouragement for Peter's first readers. It also should be a great encouragement for us, too. No believer needs to live with doubt regarding his salvation, but he should have assurance. And that assurance should be richly provided for in the presence.

And then Peter's also talking about a rich heavenly reward in the future. As well. Other passages support what Peter wrote here. I put some cross-references in your handouts, but here are the actual verses themselves.

2 Timothy 4.8 says this, Paul wrote, henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to those who have loved his appearing.

[20 : 53] The writer to the Hebrews said these words in Hebrews 12.28, Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

And Jesus himself said these words in Revelation 22.12, Jesus said, Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay each one for what he has done.

So the Lord will reward his children based upon their faithful pursuit of righteousness. So assurance in this life and riches in heaven, then, are the benefits of spiritual diligence and fruitfulness.

So that should give us even more incentive, then, to work to make our calling and election sure.

Moving on to the last section of the lesson, Peter shifts his focus somewhat, and we see that in verses 12-15.

He tells his readers why he consistently reminds them of the qualities needed to be fruitful and those same qualities that provide the assurance of our faith. He tells his readers that he's nearing the finish, the finish of his earthly life.

[22 : 10] So the finish is the fourth thing that we see tonight. Look at verses 12-15 one more time. He says, Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. I know we have at least one former teacher in here, and any good teacher knows the value and the importance of repetition.

Research has shown that people forget up to 90% of what they heard within one hour after hearing it spoken. So even believers need to be reminded over and over again of things that we shouldn't forget.

And we should remember more often than not to keep reminding ourselves of these things.

Therefore, in that verse, refers back to the greatness of salvation that he talked about in verses 1-4 of the chapter.

[23 : 32] And it also refers back to the blessedness of assurance that we've just seen in verses 5-11. And these themes are so crucial that they should never be forgotten. Peter didn't want his readers to forget that they were saved.

He didn't want them to become like the people he talked about in verse 9. And he also wanted them to remember the blessings of their salvation. We've already said that Christ has given believers everything they need for life and godliness and has called them by his powerful grace.

We saw that in verses 3-4. Such grace serves as the incentive for a godly life of virtue that we saw in verses 5-7. And then a life of godliness is necessary for entering the eternal kingdom.

And we saw that in verses 8-11. Such a godly life is not earning salvation, though. It's the evidence that we already have the salvation.

But it also is the human means by which we realize we actually have that salvation. So that's an important thing. And since I talked about the importance of repetition, I think I'll mention that again.

[24 : 41] So such a godly life is not earning salvation, but it's evidence that we already have that salvation. But it also is the human means by which we confirm to ourselves that salvation is

realized.

So Peter felt constrained to remind the readers of his teaching because eternal life was at stake. When we first started looking at 2 Peter a few weeks ago, we talked about how false teachers had started creeping into the community.

And Peter kept admonishing the church so that they wouldn't forget the basic faithful teaching they heard when they first believed. And this paragraph here that we're looking at now in verses 12-15 has one point.

That's to remind believers to keep pursuing a virtuous life. When Peter used the future tense, he was first indicating that he would remind his listeners of the truth whenever he had the opportunity, including when writing this letter.

But he also anticipated all who were in the ages to come would read this letter and be reminded of the great things that God had given him to say. So in a sense, Peter was writing them directly to us as well.

[25 : 55] Other Bible writers also reminded their readers of main themes. So listen to some verses from Paul here to see that point. This is Philippians 3-1. Paul wrote in Philippians 3-1, Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. So that's very much what Peter has in mind here. He's trying to keep the readers safe by reminding them of things that they need to know.

And then in Romans 15-15, Paul wrote, But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God.

Jude was also compelled to remind his readers of certain things. And here's Jude, verse 5. Jude wrote, Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

So Jude implies that some people have already started to forget things when he says he wants to remind them even though they once fully knew it, that Jesus saved a people out of the land of Egypt.

[27 : 03] So the important thing to remember is that there is no new revelation from God. In a sense, all who preach and teach the scriptures are reminding the people of God what God has said in his words so constantly that his repetition and theirs makes the truth stick.

The recipients of 2 Peter undoubtedly had heard other inspired New Testament letters read and preached, so they knew and believed the truth and they were firmly established in it.

And the verb established there in verse 12 means to firmly establish or to strengthen and it indicates a settled permanent condition. They'd given evidence of their faithfulness because the true gospel was strongly present with them and Peter affirmed them without doubt as genuine maturing believers.

And in verse 13, Peter reflected on why he felt the responsibility to remind the church. He thought it was fitting and right for him as an authoritative apostle to prompt the church with the truth of the gospel for as long as he lived.

He reminded the readers that it's urgent because Peter's body was subject to death and that he knew he would soon die. So his focus is on the function of reminders.

[28 : 20] Even though believers are already firmly established in the truth, they needed to be stirred up by reminders because reminders arouse and provoke believers and they prompt believers to prize the gospel again.

You know, is it possible to sometimes take the gospel for granted that we don't think as much of it as we did when we were first saved? And that's really what Peter is trying to tell his believers. We should be looking at the gospel every day just like we looked at it with the wonder when we first heard it. It should never be something that we take for granted. And Peter hoped that his words would shake the believers awake so that they would reject what his opponents taught.

Believers know the gospel but yet we must in a sense relearn it every day and appreciate it over and over again every day. Most people think that Peter was in his 70s when he wrote this letter and he likely was in a Roman prison and he anticipated dying soon.

Nero's persecution had already begun and Peter was martyred in it soon after writing this letter.

And verse 14 shows us that Peter knew he would die soon and the verse also reminds us that Jesus had told Peter about how he would die.

[29 : 38] Flip over to John chapter 21 verses 15 through 19. John chapter 21 verses 15 through 19.

These verses come after Peter's denial and after Jesus' resurrection when Jesus was recommissioning Peter. John 21 15 through 19 say, When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he had said it to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.

[30 : 47] Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, Follow me. Jesus' words were a prediction of Peter's martyrdom and he predicted that Peter would be executed specifically by crucifixion and that's evidenced by the expression, You will stretch out your hands.

Peter lived another four decades or more being faithful to feed the Lord's sheep, knowing all the while that at any moment his life could swiftly end. And tradition recorded by Eusebius says that Peter was crucified, but he was crucified upside down at his request because he felt unworthy to die exactly as his Lord had died.

So let's go back to 2 Peter 1.15 again. That's where Peter wrote, And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

The apostle used the term departure, which is actually the word exodus there, to refer to his death because the word connotes leaving one place and going to another.

[32 : 13] Notice he didn't say he was going to be done for, he just said he was departing. He's just moving to another location. In other words, he's leaving earth and going to heaven. And that's the exodus that every believer will enjoy.

Peter was not concerned that the audience remember him or his death, but he was more concerned that his audience remember the truth that he taught them. He's not so much concerned about whether his readers remember the facts of the faith.

His concern here is that the facts of the faith continue to make a difference in their daily lives as they live for Christ. In this sense, he asks Christians to remember in the same way as all Christians need to remember the core of the gospel because as we talked about, it's so easy in Christian life, especially if there's some false teachers around to move away from the root of the faith.

Peter wanted believers to avoid the hazards of spiritual negligence, and he labored diligently through his preaching and writing to reiterate several important issues. In other words, this was a final will and testament to remind believers of the greatness of salvation, the blessedness of assurance, and to also make certain that false doctrine didn't rob them of their spiritual heritage. So Peter was like a wealthy man providing for his loved ones after his death, and he indicates that he will provide for their continued reminding even after he's passed away.

[33 : 42] And of course, Peter's been gone for centuries now, but he's still reminding us of the blessings of our salvation. Christians really shouldn't forget the factual teaching about Christ's death, and we don't forget the factual teaching about Christ's death.

But all of us can easily forget the implications of that message for how we live and what we are to be. No Christian has the right to forget the gospel core, which is Christ's gracious work for us, and the more that we remember all that Christ has done for us and continues to do for us, then the better we will live for him and the more we'll seek to respond in love and obedience.

So Peter regarded his own death as imminent, and he gave his readers a truly fascinating summary of the gospel that he taught all of his life since Jesus recommissioned him.

So that gives us a challenging insight into what some of the apostles themselves saw as being vital to the heart of Christian faith. Peter spends time emphasizing salvation by grace, but he moves to speak about how the saved life is to be lived, and that too is by grace because God's grace enables us to live how he wants us to live.

And we know that because Jesus has provided everything needed to live the godly life to which we're called. But we also know that we're not machines. We have specific responsibilities to live out in certain things that we're called to do, and we've been empowered by the divine power, which of course is by Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

[35 : 21] So our work here is always in the context of our response to the God who has loved us. As we eagerly work for Christ in this context, we'll also get the benefit of making clear to ourselves, to the world, and before God himself, that our calling and election is sure.

In other words, we really are the people we think we are. So the growing Christian walks with confidence because he knows he's secure in Christ. It's not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are saved.

It's our progression in the faith that gives us assurance. So that's on your handout, but be sure to get that point. If you remember 10% of what I said tonight, that's probably the 10% to remember. And once again, it's not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are saved. It's our progression in the faith that gives us the assurance. And I used this line the last time we taught. None of us remember that we were born physically because we remember that particular day. The evidence that we were born physically is because we're standing here today. And similarly, we may not always remember when we were saved, but the evidence that we are saved is how we're living our lives today.

[36 : 39] And Peter's assurance allowed him to be a living example of Romans 12, 1 and 2. All believers need to be that same type of example. And here are Paul's words in Romans 12.

He said, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. And by testing, you may discern that is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Thank you.