

Supplementing Our Faith (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Last week we started our study in 2 Peter and got through the first four verses of chapter! Tonight's verses build on verses three and four that we finished up with last week.

So let's read 2 Peter 1, three and four again to set the stage for tonight. 2 Peter 1, three and four say, 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.

We always are appropriately cautious about anything that might suggest we could become God ourselves and the Bible always makes a proper distinction between the Creator and His creation. But in a very real sense, Christians do share in some of God's attributes, not through our effort or through our work, but through His grace. We know that Christians are called to be holy as God is holy.

Christians also share in God's immortality and we are not trapped in this world. Even though we're perishable now, we'll be raised imperishable and we will live forever.

[1 : 35] Christians will even share in God's glory. And Jesus so desired this for His people that He prayed about it in John 17. And interestingly, in the John 17 prayer, Jesus uses somewhat similar ideas to what Peter says in these verses.

He prays for His disciples and He points out the ways in which they are and will be like Him. And then He draws it together by talking about the unity between Him and the Father and between Jesus and His people.

So listen to John 16 through 23 to hear what Jesus prayed about His disciples. He prayed, They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself that they may also be sanctified in truth.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

[2 : 48] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you love me.

It's interesting to think, isn't it, that God has given us some glory because we are in Jesus. And 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 that will be a testimony then to God's love.

That last sentence is key, and once again, it's out of gratitude. God's people are now to live victorious Christian lives in a difficult world through the power of the Holy Spirit as a testimony to God's love.

And that thought leads us into the section of Scripture that we will begin studying tonight. So let's read verses 2 Peter 1, 5 through 15.

[3 : 57] This lesson will actually only go through verse 8, but the whole passage goes all the way through verse 15. So starting in verse 5, Peter says, For whoever likes these qualities, is so near-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fail. 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 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. Remember that Peter wrote this letter to believers, and in tonight's verses, Peter has two purposes.

First, he tells believers how they can have assurance that they possess the precious and very great promises that we just reviewed. And second, Peter explains to believers why he continually reminds them about the qualities that provide assurance.

[5 : 50] And the first purpose will be our focus tonight. Before we get into the verses themselves, though, let's consider the difference between eternal security and assurance.

The doctrine of eternal security, or preservation, or perseverance of the saints, is the Spirit-revealed objective fact that salvation is forever.

So, once again, the doctrine of eternal security is the Spirit-revealed objective fact that salvation is forever. And assurance is believer's Spirit-given subjective competence that they truly possess this eternal salvation.

All believers have eternal security. That's actually one of the precious and very great promises that Peter summarized in verse 4. However, some believers actually lack the assurance that they possess this eternal salvation.

And if a true believer lacks the assurance of his salvation, the lack of assurance still doesn't negate the fact that the believer really is saved. John MacArthur actually outlined eight reasons why some believers lack assurance, and we'll go ahead and summarize them here, and you'll notice some overlap among the reasons.

[7 : 04] The first reason is that some people sit under bad teaching in their churches, and such teaching makes people feel the guilt of their sin without also pointing them to God's grace and forgiveness for that sin.

Secondly, some people feel that they are too sinful to be saved themselves. So, have you ever known somebody who felt like he or she was too sinful to be saved?

You know, when you actually think about it, these people are, in a way, putting themselves above God because they're saying that they've done something that even God can't forgive.

So, it sounds really humble to say that, but in reality, they're claiming to have done something that God cannot overcome. A third reason for lacking assurance is that some people do not adequately comprehend the gospel.

They have an erroneous notion that maintaining their salvation requires their effort as well as God's, and so they require a true understanding of the gospel, namely that salvation is utterly sovereign, and it's a divine operation in which sinner's redemption relies solely on God himself.

[8 : 13] An accurate understanding of the completeness of the forgiveness is foundational to believers' assurance. The fourth reason why some people lack assurance is that they can't remember the exact moment of their salvation.

But really, the only legitimate basis for assurance has nothing to do with the past event. It's really based upon the reality of the present trust in Christ's atoning work.

You know, if you think about it, none of us remember being born when we were actually born physically, but the proof that we were born physically is that we're here today, not that we remember that we were born in the first place.

Of course. The reason I said it was my parents didn't name me, so my first year has a blank.

I haven't given them a check on a test. Well, I think even if your birth certificate has a blank in the name, you were still born if you were here today. I had to convince that because I could not get the passport.

[9 : 17] I couldn't choose who I was. I'm not here. The other good news about that, I think, is God knew what your name was going to be even if your birth certificate didn't have it on there, too. You know, another reason why some people lack assurance is that believers still feel the strong influence of their flesh and they feel the temptation to sin, and that makes them wonder if they really are a new creation in Christ.

But this battle actually probably does reveal that they're a new creation because sinners have no reason to feel guilty. Unredeemed people have no reason to feel guilty when they do sin, but Christians have the spirit within us that helps us see that we shouldn't sin.

The sixth reason why some Christians may lack assurance is because they fail to see God's hand in all their trials, and so they miss the strongest proof of assurance, which really is a tested faith. So listen to what Peter wrote in his first inspired letter for a little more on that one. This is 1 Peter 1, verses 6 through 9. He said, In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[10:51] So when we go through trials and we still believe, that's some of the strongest assurance that we can have. A seventh reason why some lack assurance is because they do not know and obey God's word.

And then finally, some lack assurance because they are deliberately sinful. But listen to what the 1689 London Baptist Confession said about assurance.

It says, All who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to conduct themselves in all good conscience according to his will, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace.

They may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, knowing that such a hope will never put them to shame. So it's very clear from the Bible that God wants believers to have assurance.

And Peter wanted believers to have assurance as well. And that's what he's going to try to show us in our passage tonight. Over the next two lessons in 2 Peter, we're going to break verses 5 through 15 into four sections.

[11:56] But we're only covering the first section tonight. You'll have to come back in three weeks when we pick up in 2 Peter because Mike will have the next two Wednesdays looking at Acts again. But the first thing we see in our lesson is the fruitful.

So tonight we'll see the fruitful. And the fruitful believers have every reason to be assured of their salvation. Listen to verses 5 through 8 again.

They tell how to be effective and fruitful in our knowledge of Christ. Peter said, For this very reason, and of course he's referring back to the precious and very great promises that allow us to be partakers of the divine nature.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

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. These verses describe in more specific terms what participating in the divine nature should look like.

[13:14] Such participation exhorts us to make every effort to change our lives. And we looked at verses 3 and 4 again at the beginning because 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 in the divine process and the divine helper in the process of transformation.

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

The characteristics in verses 5 through 7 provide an overview of the nature or essence of godly living that Peter introduced in verse 3. Believers are asked to supplement their faith, and Peter assumes that his readers have already experienced salvation.

The characteristics of godliness can be obtained only by saved people. The logical relationship between verses 3 and 4 and verses 5 through 7 is crucial because verses 5 through 7 summon the readers to a life of virtue, but verses 3 and 4 remind us that a life of godliness is rooted in and dependent upon God's grace.

Believers should live in a way that pleases God because Christ has given them everything they need for life and godliness. We always need to remember that God's gift precedes and supports the

imperative that calls for our exertion.

[14 : 46] Peter didn't lapse, therefore, into works-based here. He grounded his exhortations in God's merciful gifts. So let's look at each of the characteristics that Peter mentions in verses 5 through 7.

First, he talks about faith, and faith there refers to personal faith or trust. Trusting God is the root from which every one of the other virtues springs, and those who rely on God and his promises begin to live in a new way.

All the godly characteristics in the Christian life find their source in faith and trusting God for everything. And Peter says there that we should supplement our faith.

And the word translated supplement in the ESV means to supply or to add to something. The idea there is to give lavishly and generously.

In Greek culture, that Greek word was used for a choir master who was responsible for supplying everything that was needed for his choir. And the word never meant to equip sparingly, but it always meant to supply lavishly for a noble performance.

[15 : 53] So just like those choir masters, God has given us faith in all the graces necessary for godliness, and we add to those by our diligent devotion to personal righteousness.

Next then in Peter's list is a word that in classical Greek meant the God-given ability to perform heroic deeds. It came to mean a quality of life that made someone stand out as excellent.

And when Peter's talking about virtue, he never meant secluded virtue, and the word never meant secluded virtue or virtue of attitude, but it's a virtue that's demonstrated in life.

So in other words, that virtue should be seen by other people. And Peter is writing of the power that performs deeds of excellence. And if you're using the ESV like I am, the tie with Christ's character is even stronger than it appears when reading the verses, because the word translated virtue in verse 5 links back to the description in verse 3 of Christ's character.

Because even though we don't see it in English, virtue is the same word used in verse 3 where that word is translated as excellence. And there in verse 3 that excellence refers to Christ's character.

[17 : 06] And so again, that's a reminder that we can't produce virtue ourselves, but we can choose to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit that lives in us. And that will allow us to evidence that virtue.

And following virtue, next we see knowledge. Knowledge refers to the divine truth that's the foundation of spiritual discernment and wisdom. It means the truth properly understood and applied. Knowledge there is related to illumination, which is having the mind enlightened about the truth of Scripture. Knowledge involves diligent study and meditation on Scripture.

And it's done so to acquire the mind of Christ. And we always need to remember that true knowledge is also rooted in God's grace because he enables us to understand the Scripture.

And people who add knowledge to their lives also should be seeking self-control. Genuine knowledge can never exist apart from self-control. And self-control or self-restraint was one of the prized virtues in Greek culture.

[18 : 10] Those who live a godly life exercise self-discipline and they can restrain themselves so that they don't habitually give in to sinful desires. The word translated self-control there literally means holding oneself in.

And it's normally used in the Greek culture of athletes who sought self-discipline and self-restraint. And you remember Paul sometimes talked about beating our bodies into submission. So the athletes then would abstain from rich foods and wine and sexual activity in order to focus all their strength and attention on the training regimen.

The next item in the list is what the ESV translates as steadfastness. Depending upon the version you're using, it can also be translated as perseverance or endurance.

And perseverance or steadfastness can be a product of self-control. And the word often describes the character of believers. So the need to persevere is particularly important in the situation that Peter addressed.

If you remember from the overview last week, we had opponents threatening the church and they were attracting others to follow them with their false teaching. Some who'd begun in the way of the gospel had abandoned it.

[19 : 26] And so this moral restraint and steadfastness need to be working together for those who hope to win the ultimate prize. And a person who exercises self-control won't easily succumb to the

discouragement or the temptation to quit.

And that's because somebody with steadfastness realizes that all circumstances come from the hand of a loving father who's in control of all things. And when we realize that, that's really the secret of perseverance.

So let that last sentence soak in a little bit. Viewing all circumstances as coming from the hand of a loving father who is in control of all things is the secret of perseverance.

Next, you see that the readers also are called to godliness. Another connection is made here with verses 3 and 4 because believers have, by God's grace, already been given everything they need for life and godliness.

Remember, we saw that exact phrase in verse 3. So God has given believers everything to be godly, and yet believers must pursue that godliness. The term godliness refers to piety or, more simply, to living a life that is like God.

[20 : 37] Believers should live in a holy and godly way because Jesus is going to return one day. And the word godliness is especially common in the pastoral epistles for living the kind of life that pleases God.

And once again, it was a virtue prized in Greek society. So Peter took that idea and restated the cultural idea in a Christian framework for us. So the idea is that Christians are to live consistent godly lives, showing by their godliness that they have a very practical awareness of God in every aspect of their existence.

Despite the temptations all around, we shouldn't follow the latest fashion or fad which could lead into danger. Instead, we should live a quiet and godly life. And Peter has two more characteristics he mentions in these verses.

You'll notice that the last two characteristics both focus on love. Love is the supreme Christian virtue. And as Peter was writing this, he might have been recalling Jesus' encounter with the religious leaders that's summarized in Matthew 22, verses 35 through 40.

So listen to Matthew 22, 35 through 40. And they say, Have you ever stopped?

[22 : 20] to think about how it's impossible to love God without loving God's people? That's because God's law and heart is for his people to love others.

And the measure by which we know if we truly are a loving people is if we love people as much as we love ourselves, especially other believers. In 2 Peter chapter 5, we'll see Peter exhort his readers first to pursue brotherly kindness.

And he also uses that here in verse 5. And the term brotherly kindness there is used elsewhere in biblical exhortations. And the focus there is on love between fellow believers or the family-like devotion that should characterize the Christian community.

So here, Peter is using a word that's very distinctive of Christians in the sense that all believers are brothers and sisters. So the Greek word that Peter uses here is the word we know as Philadelphia. And that's the common term for relationships within the family unit. And the first readers of this letter may have been shocked to discover that relationships in the church should be treated as if they're all part of the same family.

[23 : 31] But that's really what Peter's trying to get across here. And of course, brotherly kindness then involves bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

It means protecting the spirit-given unity from destruction by gossip, prejudice, narrowness, and the refusal to accept a Christian for who he is in Christ. Believers' pursuit of devotion to one another flows from the highest virtue of all, and that's love itself.

And for believers, love for others has always been inseparable from love for God. The word translated love here in the last virtue is the familiar word agape.

And of course, we know that's the sacrificial, selfless love of the will. So agape love is a deliberate desire for the highest good of the person who's being loved.

It demonstrates itself in sacrificial action for the person's good. For some reminders about how agape love is inseparable from the brotherly love we just discussed, listen to a few cross-references.

[24 : 37] Here's what Jesus said in John 13, verses 34 and 35. He said, 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. So when you think about it, Jesus says we are to love other believers like he

has loved us.

So how did Jesus love us? It all goes back to the passage that Mike is preaching on on Sunday mornings right now. Listen again to Philippians 2, verses 5 through 8.

Paul wrote there, So we see here that Jesus loved us so much that he was willing to humble himself and come to earth and be the sacrifice.

For us. And he expects us to love other believers in the same way. Here's another reference from Paul about love. This is 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 9.

[26 : 03] He said, Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. And here's what John wrote in 1 John 4, verse 21.

He said, In this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must also love his brother. These last two characteristics then, brotherly kindness and love, are supremely the characteristics of Jesus Christ.

His mission in life was to sacrifice himself for humanity's good. And the transforming process of God's Holy Spirit is to take each believer toward this direction. To take each believer to becoming more Christ-like.

After all of the detail on each of the characteristics in verses 5 through 7, here's a quick summary of how they all fit together. Faith is the root of all moral virtue, and such virtue is linked with what we do with our knowledge of God.

If we use this knowledge well, we will exercise self-control. Such self-control will give us ability to steadfastly endure difficulties. This steadfastness will then lead to godliness in our relationships, and these relationships will be governed by brotherly affection and Christian love.

[27 : 20] Do you see how they all work together to produce the end result then? Moving on to the last verse we're going to look at tonight, 2 Peter 1.8 tells us why we should pay attention to whether we possess these characteristics.

2 Peter 1.8 says, 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. 3 Peter calls for pursuing these qualities, which of course is the preceding list of virtues, and sets forth the result of doing so.

The phrase rendered, are yours and are increasing, is a strong expression. The part translated, are yours, denotes owning property in an abiding sense, so to permanently own something.

The Greek translated, are increasing, refers to possessing more than enough, even too much of something. So Peter's point was that godly qualities must both exist and overflow in the life of his readers.

And of course he says that when that happens, they keep us from being ineffective or unfruitful in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so let's talk about what Peter means when he says to avoid being ineffective or unfruitful.

[28 : 42] The word ineffective is often used of idle workers who are wasting their day in the marketplace instead of working. There are several cross-references in the Bible that show that. A couple of them are Matthew 20, verse 3, and then Matthew 20, verse 6.

And then of course James said that faith without works is useless. Unfruitful could also be translated as unproductive. Matthew 13, verse 22 and Mark 4, verse 19 use the same word when they record Jesus' description of superficial believers in the parable of the soils.

And the strong word, as it does here in 2 Peter, also can refer to true believers who are for a time unproductive. Paul used the same word of true believers when he wrote to Titus.

Listen to what Paul wrote in Titus 3, verse 14. And he said, And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and to not be unfruitful.

So there you see the same unfruitful word there. But verse 8 tells us that when these Christian qualities are missing in a believer's life, he'll be indistinguishable from an evildoer or a superficial believer.

[29 : 54] But when these qualities are increasing in a Christian's life, there's the manifestation of the divine nature within the believer. And then, of course, this manifestation of the divine nature leads to assurance for the believer.

Peter made the point negatively in verse 8, but verse 8 could also be restated as when the qualities both exist and abound in believers, believers are effective and fruitful with respect to their knowledge of Christ.

Knowledge reminds us that we should always want to have a deeper relationship with our Savior and know Him better. So these qualities of character do exist within us because true believers possess the divine nature.

We've already seen that in the verses we studied last week. So we need to cultivate these qualities so that they increase and produce fruit through our lives. Peter exhorted his readers to a godly life because Christ has given them everything they need for a godly life, and they possess the magnificent promises for future perfection.

And this exhortation to holiness, then, is grounded in God's work of salvation as it's been accomplished in Jesus Christ. And we know that this is typical in the New Testament as well, that grace precedes demand.

[31 : 12] So the priority of grace, however, doesn't cancel out the need for us to diligently try to apply these qualities in our lives. In fact, we're to make every effort to carry out Peter's command.

We know that a godly character doesn't emerge from a lack of effort. Martin Luther said, they should prove their faith by their good works. Notice he doesn't say the good works are necessary to have faith.

He said they should prove their faith by their good works. And the evidence of our faith produces assurance that we do possess salvation. So in the first part of the lesson, we looked at several reasons why people lack assurance.

Now let's talk about some of the blessings that people receive from assurance. And again, I've paraphrased these from John MacArthur. One of them is that assurance of one gracious standing before God is not a small matter, but it's the supreme blessing of a Christian's experience.

And this is true because the doubter forfeits the enjoyment of all the other blessings in Christ. Assurance causes the heart to live at the highest level of joy. The blessing of assurance also lifts the soul to seek God's purposes above anything else because assurance fills the heart with gratitude and praise.

[32 : 31] Assurance strengthens the soul amidst great temptations and trials. Assurance also compels Christians to love obedience. On the other hand, the insecurity of not knowing if salvation is certain can cause people to slide more and more deeply into the sins of fear and doubt, which can lead to other sins.

Assurance also calms the soul with perfect peace in the midst of life's storms because regardless of the circumstances that come up against us here, we know we have the divine anchor of salvation and eternal security.

Hebrews 6.19 and the first part of Hebrews 6.20 say, we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

So then, assurance enables believers to wait patiently on God's perfect timing for mercy. And if our hope rests firmly in the certainty of salvation, then we can persevere in waiting for that hope.

The blessedness of assurance also purifies the heart because if believers know that they're going to spend eternity with God, enjoying their reward with Him, that will change the way they live today.

[33 : 47] Last week, we looked at the very great and precious promises that we have from God, including the gift of eternal life. Peter's message for us tonight and in the verses that we'll study in our next lesson in 2 Peter, is that God's gift of eternal life carries with it the possibility and intention that believers will enjoy the full benefits of true assurance.

So think about that one more time. God's gift of eternal life carries with it the possibility and intention that its recipients will enjoy the full benefits of true assurance.

So as we've gone through these verses tonight, we've looked at how consistent Peter's teaching is with other parts of Scripture. Listen to how much Paul's words to the Colossians sound like our passage tonight.

Here's what Paul wrote in Colossians 1, verses 9 through 14. He said, And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

So there's talking about bearing fruit and increasing in our knowledge of God. Then he says, Being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

[35 : 18] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. So we can see that no matter what passage we look at, it's consistent with what the Bible says about assurance and we should take comfort in that assurance.

Thank you.