

# PURSUING VIRTUE / Sunday School- November 22, 2009

## Unifying Topic: A FAITHFUL PEOPLE

### Lesson Text

I. Everything We Need (2 Peter 1:3-4)

II. Growing Faith (2 Peter 1:5-9)

III. Sure Of Salvation (2 Peter 1:10-15)

**The Main Thought:** According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. (2Pt.4:19, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** We all have faith in something or someone, but we often find it difficult to develop this faith. How can we support and strengthen a growing and effective faith? Peter's second letter teaches that goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love all undergird a growing faith. In Acts, we see the example of Philip, a faithful follower who led others to Jesus.

**Lesson Aim:** To help students appreciate that Jesus gives us everything we need.

**Life aim:** To teach how Christians can live faithfully in this life, enjoying all the rich, spiritual blessings Jesus has given them, building daily on the foundation of their faith, and being sure of their salvation in Christ.

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- 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:
- 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
- 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
- 1:6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
- 1:7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
- 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1:9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.
- 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:
- 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.
- 1:13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;
- 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.
- 1:15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

### HISTORY:

#### 2 Peter 1:1-2

**2Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:**—This epistle was apparently sent to the same believers who had received 1 Peter. Remember, they were scattered all throughout Asia, but written in Rome. The purpose was to combat and warn the church against false teachers and false doctrine. Three things are true of the apostle Peter:

1. He belongs to the "One" who has sent him out.
2. He is commissioned to be sent out.
3. He possesses all the authority and power of the One who has sent him out.

Peter's aim is to stabilize Christians. Peter's first statement about himself in this letter is that he is a "bond-servant" and "an apostle" of Jesus Christ. His first step in this stabilization process is to establish in position of one who voluntarily chooses to serve; an "apostle" —one who is sent out, a delegate, a messenger. His second step in this stabilization process is to establish for life in the hearts and minds of these saints the fact that the gospel they have received, believed, lived, and shared with others is the genuine, original, authentic apostolic gospel.

**2Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,**—Peter blesses those that have obtained like precious faith which came through the righteousness of God, our Savior Jesus Christ. He greets them with grace and peace to be multiplied. The more you know of Jesus, the more grace and

peace you have. Peter mentions specifically the gracious benefits of grace and peace. Grace and peace is always through the knowledge of God, Jesus our Lord. We see that the Biblical order is always grace and then peace.

- **“Grace”** (charis) – the undeserved favor and blessings of God. And note that Jesus Christ multiplies grace and peace. He gives an abundance; he causes overflow; no lack. How can a person be always overflowing with the grace and peace of God? Through the true knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. We have to know God in order to receive the grace and peace of God. What does it mean to know God?
- **“Knowledge”** (epignosei) means “full”, personal, precise, and correct” knowledge. You gain the knowledge of God through the Spirit, who dwells in you, and brings to your remembrance everything that God has said in His Word. He interprets and explains the spiritual truth of God, giving you the true knowledge of Him. Man deserves nothing from God except judgment, condemnation, and punishment. But God is love and makes it possible for man to experience His grace, in particular the favor and blessings of salvation which is in His Son, Jesus Christ.
- **“Peace”** (eirene) –be bound, joined, and woven together; assured, confident, and secure in the love and care of God. The believer’s “peace” in one sense is independent of our circumstances because it is a divine “fruit” brought forth in a life yielded to the control of the Holy Spirit. The better we know God, the more we experience grace and peace. Peace does not mean the absence of pain or absence of conflict or absence of testing times. But divine peace, the peace that the Spirit gives, does mean that in our pain, in our conflicts, in our testing times, we can have genuine inner peace (our soul at “rest”).

## **LESSON: I. 2 PETER 1:3-4 EVERYTHING WE NEED**

**2Peter 1:3** According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:— Peter says, divine power has been granted to us. Who is “us”? The “us” is not just anyone. It is only those who embrace His Son. Not everyone is a child of God. When you are born into the family of God by faith in Christ, you are born complete and God has given us everything we need for this life and for godliness. It is through an intimate knowledge of God (having relationship) who has called us by His own glory and excellence.

- **“All things that pertain unto life”** meaning a godly life; our eternal life, and our present life. Life comes from the One who has the power to stop the process of death and to deliver us from death. No man has such power. God longs for man to live, to have abundance of life; therefore He gives all things that will make a person overflow with life.
- **“Godliness”** (euseberian) means living like God; Christ-like; to live in the reverence and awe of God; to be conscious of God’s presence, that one lives just as God would live, as if He were walking upon the earth; live seeking to be like God; seek to possess the very character, nature, and behavior of God.

**2Peter 1:4** Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. These promises are great because they come from a great God and they lead to a great life. They are precious because of their value is beyond calculation.

1. He not only provides for our redemption but for our eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12).
2. He not only gives us life but the promise of life to the full (John 10:10).
3. He not only gives us His joy but joy that is complete (John 15:11). Compare 1 Peter 1:8.
4. He not only gives us peace but the promise of perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3). Compare Philippians 4:7.
5. He not only promises His forgiveness but He will remember our sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34).
6. He not only guarantees heaven but He promises heaven with Him (John 14:2-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17).
7. He not only offers us His grace but He promises that it will be sufficient for every need (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Why did God give *“these exceeding great and precious and magnificent promises”*? He gave them in order that by them, *“you might become partakers of His divine nature.”* God places within the heart of the believer His own divine nature and makes him a new creature and a new man in Christ. Then, having become partakers of the “divine nature,” (one who has been born again) enters the spiritual state of

communion with God and fellowship with Christ. "...having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" means all who come to Christ and are in Him have escaped from sin and corruption. How can we survive in a corrupt world and remain faithful to our wonderful Lord? We must rely on Christ's divine power; and we must rely on Christ's divine nature. Paul summed it all up when he wrote in (Gal. 2:20), "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me." We have become a partaker; a partner of God's promises and accepting His divine nature.

## II. 2 PETER 1:5-9 GROWING FAITH

**2Peter 1:5** And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;—As Peter continues, he covers seven great qualities and virtues which are a progressive list to be in the life of the believer. If you miss any of those steps, you will not be able to get to the next place on the list. And that's why Peter says "applying all diligence and add to your faith." In other words, he's telling and charging them! The word "**add**" (epichoregein) means in addition to God's great salvation—right along side of what God has done—add these things.

**Add** them with diligence—hasten, jump, act now, don't wait, be energetic and earnest, strenuously work to add these things to your faith and salvation as you progress and mature.

The starting point on the list is **Faith**—First, you must come to Jesus Christ by faith—that unseen part that God has worked through Jesus Christ to bring about newness in us. This must become a dynamic catalyst that will result in good works and spiritual maturity that minister fruitfulness. Now you must add:

1. **Virtue** which is moral excellence, goodness of character, moral strength and moral courage. It means always choosing the excellent way.
2. **Knowledge** which is practical intelligence, practical insight; that which enables a man to know what to do in every situation and do it according to the Will of God.

**Faith** is developed by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. By us adding to our faith, **virtue**, we fulfill moral excellence and goodness of character; then adding **knowledge**, it enables a man to know what to do in situations according to the Will of God because we are successfully growing.

**2Peter 1:6** And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

3. **Temperance** means self-control; to master and control the body or the flesh. You begin to take control of self and prevail against the lusts that rise up. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls" Prov.25:28. Know that self-control is of God, a fruit of the Holy Spirit.
4. **Patience** means perseverance; to endure, show fortitude, steadfastness, constancy. With this fruit, this is the ability to endure when circumstances are difficult.
5. **Godliness** means to live in the reverence and awe of God, devotion and piety to God. This helps a person live above petty things because of one's devotion to God.

**Temperance** handles the pleasures of life; **patience** handles the pressures and problems of life. The person who gives in to pleasures is not disciplined enough to handle pressures, and so gives up. **Godliness** does what is right because it is the Will of God. Therefore we can do what is right in the welfare of others.

**2Peter 1:7** And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

6. **Brotherly kindness** which is a love between brothers and sisters. The word used for love is phileo which means deep-seated affection and care, deep and warm feelings, holding near and dear within the heart
7. **Love** (agape) goes beyond just our fellow believers. It is for the entire world. Loves regardless of feelings.

When we have brotherly love, we love because of our likeness to others, but with agape love, we love in spite of the differences we have. These seven virtues stem first from faith and ends with love.

**2Peter 1:8** For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. "These things" mean the seven virtues or qualities. The word "**abound**" (pleonazonta) means to increase and grow, to overflow and be filled with more and more, ever learning of how to increase these things in our lives. In other words,

- do not be satisfied with your life as it is;

- with present growth;
- with staying where you are spiritually;
- with just knowing Jesus.

As we increase in these virtues, we will not be idle and slothful or unproductive or unfruitful in knowing what to do in situations of our lives. We must learn to keep our minds on Christ Jesus. In other words, do not be satisfied with your present growth; with staying where you are, adding one step, but keep abounding in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If these virtues be in us:

- We will not be barren nor unfruitful;
- We will not be blind and shortsighted;
- We will not forget that we have been cleansed from our sins;

Christians must develop these qualities, and by doing so, they will know Christ better. If these things be in us, we are full of Christ.

**2Peter 1:9 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:—** When you lack any of these things (virtues), it makes you blind and shortsighted. It makes you forget that you have been cleansed from your sins. This person's lack of fruit could exist because a person's cleansing was merely an external reformation that did not come from a truly changed heart or one who has fallen into serious error regarding the Christian life and becomes a backslider. Unfortunately, you can also go backwards. You can forget being purged from old sins and regress. Some people had godliness at one time, but sin caused them to abandon it. Many exercised self-control for a time, but then gave up on it. A person is either moving ahead in Christ or either he is sliding back from Christ. Without Christ we are blind; unable to discern our true spiritual condition. This verse is the opposite of abounding in verse 8.

### III. 2 PETER 1:10-15 SURE OF SALVATION

**2Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:—** Peter wants to rouse the complacent believer. Rather than staying blind in verse 9, Peter urges his readers to make "sure" (confirm and secure) their calling and election, in making their salvation sure to their own minds; having no lingering doubts. We cannot be sure of our calling and election if we have not been purged from our former sin. Christians should diligently pursue; work at and confirm that their calling and election is reliable, unshifting and firm; that God has called them to be saved. God has called us by His Word and His Spirit; He has elected us, separated us from the world, through sanctification of the Spirit. In other words, the believer who pursues the spiritual qualities or virtues mentioned, guarantees to himself, spiritual fruit. By practicing these virtues, we will not fall, meaning into doubt; despair; fear or even fall into apostasy (falling away from the faith) or into perdition (hell). People stumble and come short of the glory of God, but God's calling and election pursues us and will not allow us to fall. Our own efforts in pursuing the Christ-like character, continues to make our calling and election sure. By God's grace we will continue to grow in the virtues; manifesting those fruits. We have to continue on in these things by having undoubted evidence that we are children of God. Peter considers these things to be very important:

- He is always going to preach, teach, repeat, and remind them of the importance of these things.
- He is going to stir believers to do them as long as he lives in "this tabernacle"—the tent of his body.
- He was going to make arrangements with those left behind to teach these things after his death.

#### POINT:

*Salvation is to know Christ as the Son of God, who was sent to earth by the Father to save the world. We are not to look upon Christ as a mere man, as a great religious leader who founded the religion of Christianity. The person looks upon Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is the person who in turn surrenders totally to Christ as his Lord; that comes to know Christ, day by day, experiencing the overflow of the Lord's Grace and Life abundantly. This is the power of Christ— the power to save us from death and to give us Life and godliness—the power that can stop death and give us Life and Peace.*

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**2Peter 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.** Those who practice those qualities will be richly provided with the reward of eternal life. We will be richly and gloriously welcomed into heaven.

**2Peter 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.** The readers already knew the true gospel message. However, truth always needs repetition because believers forget so easily. Since we share a new nature, and a new quality of life in Christ, Peter is always going to preach, teach, repeat, and remind them of the importance of these things. The letter will always remind them as they read it over and over.

**2Peter 1:13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;**— Peter thought this was the right thing to do—to stir (wake-up from sleep; excite and arouse) believers to be reminded to perform these virtues as long as he lived in “this tabernacle”—the tent of his body—temporary earthly vessel. Therefore, as long as he was in this bodily tent, he would stir them by reminding those believers to diligently perform their duties.

**2Peter 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.** Peter knew his death was at hand as he wrote this letter. Nero's persecution had already begun killing the Christians and Peter was martyred right after writing this epistle. Tradition says he was crucified upside down, refusing to be crucified like his Lord.

**2Peter 1:15 Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.** Peter desires that they don't forget, but to always keep the true value of these virtues in remembrance, even after his death.

## SUMMARY:

This is Peter's second letter. The lesson tells us that God has given us everything we need for spiritual growth. Believers are called to put forth an effort to grow in God's Word. He tells us that to build our faith, we need to practice it more and more every day. We need to practice all these virtues that Peter lists: faith – that is, trusting in God's providence when things get tough; virtue – courage in the face of adversity; knowledge –a deeper appreciation of who God is, who we are, and what the difference is; temperance– self-control; a restraining of our desires and passions to come into line with Scripture; patience – steadfastness with others who really grind on our nerves; godliness – an awareness of the presence of God around you; brotherly kindness, and love. These are our exercises that we should practice daily; chase after, and pursue, so that we can build upon our faith. Peter says he will continue to remind them, and he wants them to remember that the divine power of God that is prepared to give us all things is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave. It also means always choosing the excellent way.

## APPLICATION:

Everything we need for life and godliness comes from God. We will have to pursue while asking God for the spiritual growth we need. Pursue while praying. Pursue while reading and it will come to pass. While we add to, another waters, and God increases. So, Maturity will come!