

Sunday, September 3, 2023 pm

STUDIES IN 2 PETER (4)
Building Upon Your Faith (1)
2 Peter 1:5-11

As we continue our study through 2 Peter, we now find Peter's admonition to build upon our faith. We have examined his introductory remarks in which he reminds them that God through His divine power has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness". He also noted that this came "through the knowledge of Him (God &/or Jesus) who called up by glory and virtue." Recall that Peter's primary focus in this letter is a warning to be aware of false teachers and how we can equip ourselves against them. Knowledge of God's word is a prime factor in accomplishing this.

With that in mind, Peter begins his teaching by emphasizing our need to be growing in our faith. It is our solid faith that will give us victory over the world and its ungodliness (1 John 5:4). Today we begin an examination of this section. I intend to present 2-3 lessons about this section. This lesson will overview the section and notice Peter's opening thoughts. Our next lesson will briefly examine the various qualities (called "the Christian graces"), and then we will notice the result when we possess and perfect them.

I. For this reason

- a. Peter clearly ties this back to his introduction.
- b. Recall how in our last lesson we addressed how we are partakers of His divine nature (possessing qualities that are associated with God's character) and that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
- c. False teachers will endanger both qualities, that is why Peter issues the warning he does later in this letter.

II. Giving all diligence

- a. **Diligence** –
 - i. A word meaning to put forth intense effort. It is described as eagerness or excited fervor to do something. L&N, of this word noted, "to bring every effort to...to do one's very best in attempting to do something.
 - ii. Some passages that demonstrate diligence
 1. Romans 12:8 – if your "talent" is leading, do so with diligence
 2. Romans 12:11 – As we are kindly affectionate toward each other we are not "lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."
 3. 2 Corinthians 7:11 as Paul describes true repentance, it included diligence. Also vs. 12 where Paul says, "our *care* for you in the sight of God." (Earnestness – NASB, ESV)
 4. Hebrews 6:10-11, *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end*, Note the context in vs. 9-12.
 - iii. Our text goes even further than this by noting we are to be giving ALL diligence – the greatest effort possible. Growing in grace and knowledge (the theme of 2 Peter (3:18)) requires intense effort in every area.
- b. NOTE: In this expression, Peter indicates that man has a part in his salvation. We have often addressed God's grace and mercy – His part, or the divine side, of salvation. It is where salvation begins. BUT we have a part, a responsibility. We need to be putting forth the necessary effort. The force of this phrase in the Greek is that of an imperative – a command.

III. Add to your faith

- a. **Add** – something that is built upon that which is already in existence. It is my belief that these qualities are progressive, meaning that they build upon one another and the order in which they are

presented is significant. There are various ways that this set of qualities (called “graces”) have been developed. Some describe it as tree, with faith being the trunk and each of the other qualities being various branches (thus not progressive but all equally developing together). Some view it as formulaic tying together faith and love, with all the other qualities developed to get us to that love. Some view it as a pyramid with faith the foundation and love the pinnacle. Still others see it as an orchestra with all parts when working together in harmony produce a complete composition of faith (or as some would say, “a well-orchestrated life”). I view it as a staircase that is ever increasing.

- b. Faith is foundational – it is the foundational quality that leads us toward perfection.
- i. Faith is wholly believing and trusting God. Hebrews 11:1 describes it as *“the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Other versions (NASB, ESV) use the words assurance and conviction. Because we do totally believe that what God and our Lord promises He will do we continue to trust Him. And we are fully convinced (it is not blind) that He is true, even though we have not seen Him. The New English Translation uses the phrase, *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.”* Similarly, the New Century Version says, *Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it.*
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 5:7 notes that *we walk by faith and not by sight*, which ties into this description.
 - iii. Hebrews 11:6, without faith we cannot please God.
 - iv. 1 John 5:4 – Faith is that which gives us victory in a world that is opposed to God and us.
 - v. Faith must be active and responsive – James 2:14ff.
 - vi. It means we are doing something. Consider Hebrews 11 –
 1. By faith Abel offered (11:4)
 2. By faith Enoch walked with God (11:5)
 3. By faith Noah “prepared an ark” (11:7)
 4. By faith Abraham “obeyed”, “went out”, “dwelt”, “offered up Isaac”, (11:8,9, 17),
 5. By faith Moses “was hidden”, “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”, “forsook Egypt”, “kept the Passover”, etc. (11:23-29)
 - vii. If we do not have faith, it is likely we will not mature spiritually, resist the devil when things get difficult, or remain faithful to the end.

IV. **Building on our faith**

- a. **Virtue** – or moral excellence. I often associate this with integrity. But it clearly is related to living an honorable and good life. Some associate this with courage that will not compromise as one stands for his convictions. This is Peter and John as they stand before the council – Acts 4:17-21. Our faith needs to be demonstrated by our good character. And that good character will factor in to the rest of the qualities Peter mentions here.
- b. **Knowledge** – we need an understanding of God’s word. Romans 10:17 tells us that our faith comes by hearing God’s word. If our faith is to increase, so must our knowledge. The better we understand God’s word, the better prepared we are to face temptations, trials and false teachers and their doctrines. Recall Ephesians 4:11-16, we are grounded so that we will not be “tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine”, etc. Colossians 1:23 notes, *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast* (virtue – TT), *and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel* (knowledge – TT) *which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.* Knowledge comes after virtue, because our moral character will determine how we approach and accept what God tells us to do.
- c. **Self-control** – or temperance means that we are disciplined as we apply God’s word. We understand that we will always get our way. We know that there will be temptations and sinful desires that we must resist. We understand that at times we must choose the BEST option over a good one. 1

Corinthians 9:24-27 describes the temperate attitude in athletes and ultimately in the way Paul conducted himself.

- d. **Perseverance** – or patience. As we strive to grow as Christians, we are going to suffer setbacks and obstacles. Jesus described the road to heaven as difficult and the gate narrow that leads to life (eternal) – Matthew 7:13-14. With proper knowledge and self-discipline, we will not give up during difficult times. Galatians 6:9 challenges us to not grow weary in doing good, “for in due seasons we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”
- e. **Godliness** – a word that is descriptive of piety and reverence toward God. With this quality we are entering another plateau toward spiritual perfection. We find reason to be faithful because of how following His direction has strengthened us and given us purpose. Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 4:7-8 to exercise ourselves toward godliness. We have a greater appreciation for God which will help us to increase in everything we have addressed thus far and influence our interaction with others as we proceed. Without a proper respect toward God, we will NOT reach toward spiritual maturity.
- f. **Brotherly-kindness** – from the Greek, φιλαδελφία (philadelphia) it is a word that means the affectionate love of a brother. As we mature in God’s word it is going to impact how we interact and treat each other, including our brethren. Brotherly love is hallmark of our faith that the world needs to see (John 13:34-35). Romans 12:10 challenges us to develop this love. It is high in our process because of all the groundwork that leads to this genuine relationship that we have with each other.
- g. **Love** – from the Greek ἀγάπη (agape) this is “Christian love”. “Caring enough to sacrifice for what is best.” It has an impact on every relationship we are in and ought to govern every decision we make toward others, both friend and foe. 1 Corinthians 13:13 described it as better than both faith and hope (both qualities that provoke us to love). 1 Corinthians 12:31 describes it as “the most excellent way.” When included in lists, it is always either first or last – depending on the need for emphasis. It is at the pinnacle or “top rung” of our list, because it is the product of developing all other qualities that lead up to it, and it requires great maturity to perfect, which is our goal.

And thus we can see Peter’s admonition to build upon our faith with these various qualities. In our next study we will notice the results of fully developing them. It is my conviction that if we want to go to heaven, we are going to be working on each of these qualities on a daily basis. And that is why, when we are truly striving to draw closer to God, we will see progress in all of these. What about you? Are these the qualities that define who you are? Think about it!