

Review

In June, we had three studies in the epistle of 2Peter. Since I was not here for the entirety of July, it would probably be best to review a bit. Fortunately, we only have four verses to go back over:

2Pet. 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ...

Peter has chosen to be the servant of Jesus Christ for life. And Jesus chose Peter to be an apostle, which is a "sent-out one."

2Pet. 1:1 ...To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ

Peter is writing this letter to Christians everywhere, people who have faith in God the Son, Jesus Christ. This faith has resulted in forgiveness of sin, because God judges them not on their own righteousness, but on the righteousness of Jesus.

2Pet. 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

When you study God's Word, the more you know about Him. The more you understand Who He is, the more grace you experience. And the more grace you experience, the more peace you have. So grace and peace multiply with your knowledge of God.

2Pet. 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Everything that we need for this life and for godliness has been given to us. If we pursue the knowledge of God, we will not be lacking anything.

2Pet. 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

By God's glory and excellence, we have also been granted some great promises - promises for this life, and promises for eternity. By these promises, we can share the "divine nature," which is what God is.

In other words, God's attitude and approach. We can identify with how He feels, and what He thinks about things. We can relate with where He's coming from and what He's all about.

For This Very Reason

Now, Peter says, "For this very reason..." In other words, "Hey Christians! Because you've escaped the world view, and taken on God's view, here's where you go next..."

1:5-7 The Progression Of Faith

In these verses, Peter gives us a list of eight things, which are a progressive list. Progressive lists are like assembly instructions, requiring you to follow along step-by-step. In this case, Peter's progressive list details the progression of faith.

Imagine this list as driving directions. You have a starting point, a series of instructions, and a final destination:

"Start here, turn left at this street, go 3 miles, turn right at this stop light, get onto the freeway going north, get off at this exit, and it's on the corner."

If you miss any of those steps, you will not be able to get to the next place on the list. If you don't turn right at the stop light, you'll never find the freeway. If you don't get off at the right exit, you'll never see your destination on the corner.

That makes it obvious how important it is to follow the progression. And that's why Peter says "applying all diligence." In other words, he's telling us, "Make sure you don't miss any of the items on the list as your faith progresses and matures."

Faith

The starting point on the list is faith. If you haven't come to faith in Jesus Christ yet, none of the rest of this message will make any sense to you. Until you have come to believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to forgive your sins, you can't begin this journey of progression.

But, if you have that faith, then let's see if you've gone to the next step.

Moral Excellence

The first direction? You have faith, now supply moral excellence.

Moral excellence is virtue, good morals. This is the first thing that should be added to your faith.

Some examples: If you're a thief and you come to faith in Christ, you should very soon afterwards stop stealing. If you're a liar and come to faith in Christ, then you should stop lying. If you dress in provocative clothing, then that should change when you become a Christian.

Knowledge

Once moral excellence has been added to your faith, then knowledge is to be added next.

God does not delight in ignorance. The so-called "blind faith" that people always seem to talk about certainly shouldn't last very long. God wants us to pursue the true knowledge of Him, because ignorance is not bliss, it's just immaturity. You can find many Christians who have faith and exercise moral purity, but for many, that's all they know. God wants us to grow far beyond those simple beginnings. He wants us to grow in our knowledge of Him.

Self-Control

As we grow in our knowledge of God, self-control is to come next. Too often, we in church have this backwards. We preach condemnation against those who don't have control of themselves instead of teaching the Word of God. But if someone isn't gaining the knowledge of God, why do we expect them to exercise self-control?

Perseverance

From self-control, we are led to perseverance. Perseverance is a patient endurance through difficulty. Being in this walk with God for the long haul, in spite of how hard it is to do.

Simple experience has shown me that when Christians want to give up, it is almost always because they haven't been exercising self-control in their walk. They compromise, fall into sin, and then decide that the

Christian walk is too hard, too restrictive, or too much for them to handle.

Godliness

In perseverance, supply godliness. The persevering people who are sticking with the Lord for the long haul are the ones who end up with true godliness. Oh, there are forms of godliness (2Tim. 3:5), but these are just outward showings. True godliness is in the heart. It is devotion and piety. It is having true reverence for God. It is being completely devoted to Him.

Brotherly Kindness

Have you ever wondered why so many Christians can be evil to one another? Why brotherly kindness isn't as prevalent in the church as you think it should be? Because brotherly kindness comes from true godliness. Brotherly kindness doesn't immediately follow faith. There must be a maturity: faith must progress to purity, and then grow in the knowledge of God. Self-control must result, and the believer must persevere in their walk with God. Godliness will result, and that's when true brotherly kindness will happen. No wonder there is such a lack of brotherly kindness among Christians! It's simply an indication that we haven't completely followed the progression of faith towards maturity.

Love

And like brotherly kindness, love results from this progression. Unlike brotherly kindness, love is directed beyond just our fellow believers. It is for the entire world. For unbelievers, for Muslims, for homosexuals, for pagans and wiccans, for prostitutes and drug pushers. Because to be mature in the faith is to have the heart of God. And never forget God's heart: He...

John 3:16 "...so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..."

1:8 Useful And Fruitful

As you follow this progression of faith, you will become so useful

and fruitful in the kingdom of God, it will amaze you!

1:9-11 Forgetting Your Purification

Unfortunately, this progression is not a one-way street. You can also go backwards down it. You can forget your purification 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.

Saints, be diligent. Make sure that you're going the right way through this progression: moving forward, not backward. Don't rely on the fact that you were saved back in '79 or '83. Don't depend on the righteousness you walked in in the '90's.

2Pet. 1:10-11 ...be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.