

"...giving all diligence."

2 Peter 1:1-11

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2 Peter 1:1-11

1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that [pertain] to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption [that is] in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, [you] will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter clearly loved to teach about endurance. Yet it is interesting to note that Peter kind of went down in history as a guy who *failed* to endure! Truthfully, it was one of the most spectacular failures in recorded history. In fact, his "3 strikes" denial and fall have really been far more famous than anything he ever wrote! Maybe epic failure has the ability to make a person a great expert. For this is the man that had and will yet call on us all to 'endure.'

Endurance. One of the traditional and yet epic traits of manliness. Standing strong. Remaining. Lasting. Not stopping. Not quitting. The ability or strength to continue and last, despite fatigue, stress, or adverse conditions. Stamina through hardship and trials.

Peter had certainly already addressed this issue in his first letter. He had even encouraged them not only to endure, but to "thrive and grow" despite the natural fatigue that comes with a faithful walk... even amid persecution and torment from Caesar Nero. Yes, even despite the stress, ...despite the adverse conditions that are inevitable for every believer who passes through this world.

Now comes letter number two. Peter's last words to us. Soon after the writing of this letter, Peter would be executed for being a follower of Christ and definitely for being a **preacher** of Christ. It is highly doubtful that that event would have come as a surprise to him. One can only wonder what happened to our greater faith, in that people used to die for it, and now, well, many of us don't even want to break a sweat for it! Yet despite his impending departure, Peter was still determined to "endure" until God took him home. He was going to be faithful until his end. And we have every reason to believe he did exactly that.

Peter was a man of weakness, and was at the same time the man to whom Jesus remarked, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you." He was impulsive and flawed. He was "the rock." He was both men in one, and he no doubt knew it. Somewhere along the way, this man came to know how to embrace the strength of the Spirit in himself, and leave the flesh behind. In Mark 14:37, Jesus said

to Peter...'Simon, are you sleeping?' Yet early in Acts that same man was unflinching before the very men who had condemned Jesus to death...and he brazenly pronounced judgment upon all of them for executing Christ.

So what was his secret? And is it, in truth, really a secret at all? Perhaps we just are not looking in the right place? Or perhaps we are simply not attentive to the directions? For aren't we generally apt to try putting something together on our own accord, and when we fail, we then read the directions?

In Peter's first letter he encouraged and frankly demanded that we faithfully endure! Now in his second letter, he gives us the instruction on just how to practically carry that out. He tells us what it all is to look like. Practical instruction on walking the committed walk through the knowledge of Christ.

So often we claim to know Christ, yet in truth our understanding and real personal familiarity with the person and the ways of Christ are often limited to what we hear in church and live out in church. Few of us are willing to put on the cloak of the disciple. Rare is the individual that is so willing to step out of the pack to really experience the Jesus of the Gospels. To put His ministry and kingdom above all other dreams, desires, and worldly passions. We frankly want Jesus to fit into our present lives and plans, and if that doesn't happen easily, we will trim and 'reshape' the gospel so that square peg will fit into that round hole!

In this letter, Peter will now write concerning the complete relationship with Christ. The "wholeness" of both Christ's message and His presence. This is more than just an intellectual understanding or a passive church attendance. For he now takes us to the crucible of a living participation ...not in religion or even church life, but rather in Christ's living presence. He reminds the believer that a life in Christ can only be complete through the embracing of the "whole" Jesus. The whole Christian "package." The totality of a radical sold out faith.

This would be Peter's "swan song." His "famous last words." On his way out the door he would take one final shot. One more attempt to point us all toward the deep ...the firm...the critical personal relationship with Christ.

Peter began this letter by merely calling himself a "servant." Yet the original meaning of that word goes beyond our modern understanding of the term "servant." For the word in the Greek...doulos, means "bond-slave." A bond-slave was in complete subjection to his master. A bond-slave had no authority except that which was given to him by his master. But there is one more caveat to this story...one that is so crucial to grasp the significance of this. A doulos, actually ...eventually...remained in the servitude of his master by choice. He was not under any restraint or bondage. After the debt was paid, he could simply walk away. So ultimately, he was there *willingly*. It was where he wanted to be...even at the cost of his own freedom.

Peter also rightfully takes on the title of "apostle." Jesus gave him that title early in the gospels. The word "apostle" means "one sent forth." Specifically, these were men who personally witnessed Jesus and walked with Him, and were called into service by Him.

Peter then addresses those to whom the letter was written. Those "that have obtained like precious faith..." That's us. Clearly, we can therefore receive the following words in this letter as if they were addressed specifically to us. Peter, then borrowing a page from the apostle Paul's writings, opens with the phrase "grace and peace."

Not receiving what we deserve is "mercy." But receiving instead favor, love, and all that we do not deserve, that is grace. And without receiving first his grace, we will never know, never possess, this second gift, peace. I have heard the claims of the rebellious who taunt the believer with "I have never been so happy now that I am away from Church and faith!" Happy like a trip to the fair, no doubt, but peace they do not and will never have outside of Christ. Php 4:7 "...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

One thing that time has proven is that peace is the sole possession of "the master." In such, it becomes quite clear why Peter, and so many of us, would shun the freedom that this world has to offer and choose instead to remain a doulos bond-slave forever in subjection to our master.

Ps 29:11...The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

John 14:27... *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

A question naturally arises here: why do so many who claim to be one of His followers fail to know and experience that kind of peace in their lives? After all, God promises peace to his 'doulos.' Perhaps because so many of us attempt to live our faith lives like that of a servant in the classic modern sense. A servant who puts on the uniform and 'punches in' for their shift and punches out later, takes off the uniform and goes home to a different life where they live for themselves? These will never know what it means to be a doulos, nor the peace that goes along with it.

Such occurs because so many fail to follow through on the rest of this verse, which states the prerequisite of a "knowledge of God and Jesus (Christ)..." Perhaps we should stop for a moment and ask ourselves in truth, "what do I really know about God? Do I only know *of* the practices and perimeter aspects of Christianity, or do I really **know Him**? Very few of us really know Him personally and intimately, and of course, our lack of peace and endurance follows such.

Verse 3 is one of those mountain top verses of scripture. Peter says we have been given...*past tense* "*given*"...ALL THINGS in the matters of life...ALL THINGS of Godliness. Everything? Apparently so. Which is ironic in a world that keeps looking...keeps searching, for that ever illusive 'meaning of life'...at least the meaning of their life personally and individually. That constant search for purpose and peace.

According to this, outside of Him, lies nothing I need. In Him lies all the secrets, purposes, and passions of life. Coming to that understanding and embracing such is the "brass ring" of our years on this planet! This therefore should eliminate the "highbred" life that we as believers so often attempt to live, with some mixture of the "God element" and additional addendum's from the "catalog of life in the world." For the doulos, God has it all.

There is always going to be those who are present amongst us, or participatory in the greater church body and have never attained such a fullness. They participate for years in the church community and still fail to thrive...and ultimately fail to endure. All because they really do not know their Savior, His promises, and His ways, His character and His demands... they fail to give what verse 5 says is "diligence."

Diligence means that some effort is requested...required even, on our part. If there is no effort on our part, it's all over before we even start. This relationship with Jesus...just like any and all earthly relationships require diligence on our part. That fact is understood to be fact in every area of life and yet apparently such is often lost...or better yet denied, when it comes to Christ and Christendom.

There are so many of us that claim to be His, yet constantly struggle with finding in themselves any passion and desire, thus effort, to do and be and grow in Christ. If it was a box seats at a packer's game, they'd be there, or a free fine dinner in Minneapolis, they'd drive there, or some other earthly pleasure or passion, they would make the time and give the effort...But Jesus? Yet we claim to love Him best.

And where does this diligence come from? It's actually a "side-effect" of the most critical element of all, our love...our very passion, for the one who redeemed us in the first place. Who died so we might live. Throughout scripture, we have passage after passage telling us that our love...if it is real love, will create in us an affection, a devotedness... a forward action on our part. There is no way around it, and no explaining our contrary actions in any other manner.

John 21:16 "He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Acts 21:13 "Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Heb 6:10 "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

As we study His Word, as we consume the deeper truths and challenges of scriptural direction...we fall deeper in love. Does such not happen in our earthly love relationships? The more I come to know Sharon the more I love her. The more time I spend with her, the more time I want to spend with her. We therefore come to know what God wants, and understand His truths. If we do not, we are doomed to an immature walk and ultimately much failure on our part.

This is our participation! Not in our own strength and efforts, but empowered by His “exceeding great and precious promises and their fulfillment”...his very nature within us! This is the God living in us...the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

One may wonder how I as pastor here ascertain what the current spiritual state is of the fellowship. One big way is by taking note of the traffic in the church bookstore. For many, our church service attendance is the whole of our gathering of new knowledge. But it doesn't happen that way. It's not enough. Few of us are willing to put on the cloak of the disciple all week long. Rare is the individual that is so willing to step out of the pack to really experience the Jesus of the Gospels. To put His ministry and kingdom above all other dreams, desires, and worldly passions.

* What are we reading?

* What are we listening to?

* Are we giving time and effort toward gaining knowledge and understanding of the God who created us, or do we not really want to be like our Dad?

* Are we deeply and purposely interacting with Him and his body the church?

Here at this church we have weekly classes, mid-week Bible studies, fellowship small groups, plentiful books, etc. Knowledge comes to us in two ways...both in play here. ONE, is the knowledge we learn through study. Are we? The other is “gnosko” knowledge. This kind can only be acquired through experience. The way we experience God is through practice...servanthood, and active participation in the work of the kingdom! Learning and living...this is the life of the faithful believer.

Do you know Him? **Really** know Him? Clearly, Peter “finished well.” He was a man of weakness, and yet he was at the same time the man to whom Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you.”

God seeks a reply. A “response” from us. A reciprocation because of the gifts He has given us. That would mean some effort is requested...required even on our part. Not for salvation, but for sanctification. A “giving back.” A “reasonable service” as Paul puts it in Romans 12.

What “response” is God seeking from us herein? What proof of our love is He desiring to see in us? Peter begins now to list these additions, telling us we are seek after them with diligence. That word means earnestness and striving. We are to earnestly strive for virtue. Another of those old words that have fallen out of use. Virtue is high achievement and purity. Then to virtue, we are to add knowledge. This is the knowledge we receive upon the study of the Word, consuming the deeper truths and challenges of scriptural direction. We must know what God wants, and understand His truths. If we do not, we are doomed to an immature walk and ultimately, much failure.

To that knowledge we are to add temperance. This simply means self-control, which is only managed through the addition of the next item on the list: patience. Self-control is to deal with the pleasures of life, and patience is to deal with its problems and pressures.

To patience we are to add godliness. Meaning God-like-ness. It has in it the idea of reverence, and worship.

To godliness, brotherly kindness. We are to love the brethren. We are to love one another. (John 13:35, Heb 13:1, Rom 12:10) And to brotherly kindness, charity. This is agape love. The supernatural love that is without

expectation of reciprocation. Brotherly kindness loves because of our commonalties, and agape loves despite our differences.

If these things exist within us and truly abound, then we will be effective and fruitful. Not just for the furthering of the kingdom, but for ourselves as we pass through this life. These that Peter has listed here for us, are the true manifestation of real knowledge of Christ. Some say they have such knowledge, but these traits are never made evident in their lives. THIS is the fruit of real understanding and learning. The knowledge of Christ that has moved from the intellect to the actions, from the head to the heart, from the heart to the hands and feet. Peter, like in his first letter, still desires to see the believers really live what they hear; and so do I. To that knowledge, we are to add “self-control.” This means the commitment to the word “no.” I know that it is not such a popular word in our American economy, but here it is on the pages of scripture!

If these traits and actions exist in us and yes, abound, we will ***not be***....(wait for it...).....BARREN AND UNFRUITFUL! We will not fall, we will not fail. We will not turn back, we will not forget. Peter should know.
