

From Knowing to Growing 2 Peter 1:1-11

2 Peter 1:1-11 Introduction

- Those early Christians, they had real faith.
- Think of the great heroes and martyrs, the apostles and great saints of church history.
- Every once in while some powerful new hero comes along – a dedicated missionary or gifted teacher who gains a huge following.
- But what about our faith? Can it ever really be as good as theirs?
- Peter wants us to understand that it is.

- The Christian life begins with an act of faith.
- We have to consciously put our trust in Jesus Christ who died for our sins.
- But then what?
- We have to grow in our faith.
- We grow in our faith by learning about God, getting to know Him more intimately, and exercising our faith in a life of increasing obedience.

- In our overview of 2 Peter we said it like this:
 - Truth + Obedience = Growth
- Now we are filling in some of the details.

The way that we move from knowledge to growth is through obedience-based discipleship.

2 Peter 1:1-11 Outline

- We have a precious faith just like that of the apostles. 1:1-2
- We have all things that pertain to life and godliness. 1:3-4
- We now need to add to our faith, 1:5-9
- To make our call and election sure. 1:10-11

We have a precious faith just like that of the apostles. 1:1-2

- Peter is speaking to us as one of the leading apostles – those specially chosen and appointed messengers of Christ.
- He wants us to know that our faith is just as good as his.
- We have a precious faith just like that of the apostles. 1:1-2
 - *“Faith unites the weak believer to Christ, as really as it does the strong one, and purifies the heart of one as truly as of another; and every sincere believer is by his faith justified in the sight of God.”*
Matthew Henry (1662 – 1714)

- Four Ways that Peter refers to Jesus:
 - Jesus is the Savior
 - Jesus is God
 - Jesus is the Christ
 - Jesus is Lord
- All of them put together strongly emphasize the deity of Jesus Christ.
- The Athanasian Creed says it like this:
 - *“The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost [Spirit] is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.”*
- Or, with Bible commentators Lucas & Green:
 - *“It is quite right for us to affirm that Jesus Christ is God, and quite right for us to affirm that Jesus Christ is not all there is to God.”*
- 1:2 Peter distinguishes between two types of knowledge:
 - *Epignosis* is “personal knowledge,” of God or Christ which, for Peter (not all NT writers), is about the same as conversion. (See John 17:3)
 - We find it in verses 2, 3 and 8. Also 2:20.
 - *Gnosis* is more like knowledge in the sense of information or understanding.
 - Peter uses it in verses 5 and 6. Also 3:18.

We have all things that pertain to life and godliness. 1:3-4

- 1:3 Peter first spelled out the deity of Christ.
- Now he points out the sufficiency of Christ: Having Jesus, we need nothing else.
- All that we need as available in Him.
- Bauckham translates the start of this verse as follows:
 - “His divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for a godly life ...”
- 1:4 Either we share the character of those who are being judged, or we share the character of the one who does the judging.
- We don’t pretend to be perfect.
- Nor do we cease to aim for perfection.
- Instead, we can say, “We will be perfect.”
- We let God’s promises motivate us now, knowing that He gives us everything we need.
- 1:4 This verse made a big impact on the young John Wesley and was instrumental in his conversion experience.
 - May 24, 1738: I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words: 'here are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4). ...

- In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. ...
- June 4 he wrote, "was indeed a feast-day. For, from the time of my rising till past one in the afternoon, I was praying, reading the Scriptures, singing praise, or calling sinners to repentance. All these days I scarce remember to have opened the Testament, but upon some great and precious promise. And I saw more than ever that the Gospel is in truth but one great promise from the beginning of it to the end."

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We now need to add to our faith, 1:5-9

- Peter now lays out the essence of what we are calling "obedience-based discipleship."
- His point is that simply knowing we have the promises of God is not enough.
- Saving faith gives us an intimate knowledge of God which, in turn, gives us the desire to grow in godly character and obedience.
- This is authentic spiritual growth.

- 1:5-7 We shouldn't make too much of the exact order of the qualities Peter mentions.
- His point is that adding obedience to our faith is what causes us to grow.
- Early Christian writing in and out of the NT linked virtues with faith as the starting point and love (agape) at the end. For example:
 - 1 Corinthians 13:13
 - 2 Corinthians 8:7
 - 1 Timothy 1:5

- 1:5-7 These character traits require effort, but are not produced by our efforts alone.
- Look back at verse 3 once more.
 - *"True virtue in the Christian life is not 'polishing' human qualities, no matter how fine they may be, but producing divine qualities that make the person more like Jesus Christ."*
 - Warren Wiersbe, *Be Alert*

- 1:8 Do we have a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ – Peter's *epignosis* ?
- If so, then, adding these qualities to our faith is what is necessary for our faith to become fruitful.
- The most fruitful and effective Christians are not always those who are the most dynamic or gifted – they are people who are willing to grow in their faith.

- 1:9 On the other hand, Peter has some harsh words for those who refuse to grow.
- They are blind and have spiritual amnesia.
- Ignoring God's promises, neglecting "all things" that pertain to godly living, according to Peter, is simply stupid.
- In the book of Revelation, the church of Laodicea was guilty of this. (Revelation 3:17)

To make our call and election sure. 1:10-11

- Peter is not implying that salvation is in some sense insecure.
- He is really agreeing with Paul and his assertions in 2 Timothy 2:19.
- If we grow in the Christlike virtues that Peter lists in 1:5–7, we will gain increasing confidence that God really did call us and choose us before the foundation of the world.
- Warren Wiersbe says it like this:
 - *"It is not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are saved; it is our progression in the faith that gives us that assurance. The person who claims to be a child of God but whose character and conduct give no evidence of spiritual growth is deceiving himself and heading for judgment."*
- The way of life that Peter has described for us is the path into the eternal kingdom of Christ.
- Those who practice these qualities will be abundantly supplied with the reward of eternal life.
- The word "abundantly" may indicate that there are degrees of blessing and reward both in this life and in heaven.
- Regardless of how we understand this specific verse, it's clear that Peter's focus is on eternity.
- Again, Peter would agree with Paul, this time in 1 Corinthians 15:19.
- We are motivated by God's great and precious promises to look forward to the future.
- We are empowered, having all things that pertain to life and godliness, even now.

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2 Peter 1:1-11 Conclusions

- We have a precious faith just like that of the apostles.
- We have all things that pertain to life and godliness.
- We now need to add to our faith,
- To make our call and election sure.

We have a precious faith just like that of the apostles.

- Let this sink in. How is this possible?
- A personal knowledge of God is available through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
- God's grace, peace and everything else are all ours in the same way that they were Peter's.

We have all things that pertain to life and godliness.

- Consider this truth. By Peter's standards, it may seem that our levels of obedience, holiness and love for God are all pathetic.
- Divine power available to us.
- We need to resolve daily to make use of the power available.

We now need to add to our faith,

- Faith is not the end but the beginning.
- A love like God's love is the end.
- The two of these together will be combined with any number of godly virtues.
- Peter has been encouraging us to engage in obedience-based discipleship.

To make our call and election sure.

- Does faith in Christ really save us – as the Apostle Paul taught?
- Yes, of course. But how do you know that the faith you have is really saving faith?
- Assurance will come as an intimate knowledge of God combines with intentional obedience to build a genuine godly character.

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