

“Are You Adding to Your Faith?”

2 Peter 1:5-11

April 22, 2007

Dr. Jerry Nelson

Did you work hard last week?

Did you pay attention to your job, thinking about the tasks that needed to be done, giving yourself to doing them well, evaluating carefully the effectiveness of what you did, and expecting it to make a difference?

Probably both your self-respect and your need of an income keep you focused and disciplined about getting to work and doing a good job. Very wise!

How about you who are going to school or planning to do so;

Are you concerned about what college you should attend or what courses you need to take?

Do you invest your money and a lot of your time to make certain you have the best preparation possible to earn a living and make a difference in the world?

Again, that's very wise!

Did you realize that you ought to lose a little weight and so you exercise because not only will you look better and feel better but also you might actually be more productive for longer.

You put together a plan and you are working it.

You get up a little earlier in the morning and exercise; you discipline yourself at meals and between.

The truth is you are very thoughtful, careful and disciplined about this.

You'll be glad you did it!

How about planning for retirement?

Are you concerned about how you will meet expenses when you either choose to retire or cannot work any longer?

Have you set aside some of your income, even denying yourself the car you'd really like, the vacation you have wanted to take, the larger house that you really need, because you know that discipline now will make a huge difference in the future?

That's wisdom in action!

How about your eternal relationship with the living God?  
Are you thinking, investing, and disciplined?

Or is it possible that you are more concerned about your  
physique than your relationship with God?  
Are you more disciplined about your job and your  
retirement than your life with Jesus?

How can that be?

It seems to me that there are only two possibilities: either we  
don't believe there **is** a God or we don't **heed** the God who **is**.  
Most of us here would say we believe there is a God so  
for some; it must be that we don't really pay attention to  
him.

For many of us who believe in God, our sinful nature coupled with  
bad theology combine to lead us in one of two directions – either into  
legalism or into license.

In the Italian strait of Messina sailors had to navigate between a  
whirlpool and a rock wall.

Centuries ago they named the twin dangers, Scylla and  
Charybdis after two Greek mythical monsters.

Like Scylla and Charybdis legalism and license have always been the  
twin enemies of the soul.

Since time began legalism has been one option that many have  
adopted.

They have assumed they could be good enough (not perfect  
mind you, but good enough) to get an “okay” from God when  
they die.

Those who took that idea seriously worked very hard to be  
good enough and either lied to them about how well they were  
doing or they lived in a lot of fear.

Others simply gave up and either stopped believing in God or stuck their heads in the sand and hoped for the best.

Many who call themselves Christians in the world have taken this legalism approach to their lives with God.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the Reformers did their best to oppose this deadly misconception of Christianity.

They stressed salvation by grace alone.

They made their case and restored Christianity to a biblical reality.

But just as in the Apostle Paul's day so at the time of the Reformers there quickly grew up a perversion of the biblical doctrine of grace that likewise, coupled with the sinful nature, led in another deadly direction – license.

License says that since I'm saved and secured by grace and not by my own doing, it doesn't ultimately matter whether I seriously follow Jesus in this life.

It appears that many who call themselves Evangelicals in the world today have taken this approach called license.

Legalism wants to **earn** God's favor and license wants to **spurn** God's favor.

But the Bible declares a life lived between Scylla and Charybdis  
It's the life described for us today in our reading from 2 Peter 1:1-11.

Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

2 Peter 1:1-11

"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the

divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Pray Isaiah 55:11 God you said, that your “word that goes out from (your) mouth...will not return to (you) empty, but will accomplish what (you) desire and achieve the purpose for which (you) sent it.” Do your Word-work in us today.

Today, some of us may leave here somewhat angry.

Others of us may leave here repentant and ready to get serious about our relationship with Jesus.

Others, I hope many, will leave encouraged to persevere, to keep on keeping on, in your attention to following Christ more and more closely each day.

The sequence and connection of ideas in this passage are rather obvious:

In verses 1-4, which we looked at last week, Peter lays the foundation.

And the Gospel is that foundation: Through the sinless life and sacrificial death of Jesus we have been given a relationship with the living God.

Through this grace, as Peter said it, we now” participate in the divine nature” and have “escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

Not only that but also in this gospel, this good news relationship with Jesus, we have been given “everything we need for life and godliness.”

The resource for becoming God’s child **AND** for living as his child is given to us in the good news of grace – all of life is a response to grace.

Peter lays that foundation in verses 1-4.

Next, in verses 5-7 he says **we have responsibility** in this Christian life.

“For this very reason, **make every effort to add** to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”

Then finally in verses 8-11 he describes the good outcome of this grace and obedience while adding a thinly veiled warning about disobedience.

I want to look at this last part first.

I want us to see **how serious** Peter is about our responsibility described in the middle part, verses 5-7.

Hear it again from 2 Peter 1:8-11:

“For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure (the qualities described in verses 5-7), they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Lay aside your preconceptions for a minute and hear what Peter says.

“If you possess these qualities in increasing measure” two things will happen:

1. They will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. (Last part of v10&11) “For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, Peter uses a double negative to make a positive:

If you possess these qualities of perseverance, godliness, self-control and love among other things, you will be effective and productive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The goal of the fully human life is to know God.

Trees, animals and even angels can't know or experience God as we can.

As I said last week, if there is a God, if he is sovereign, holy, just and loving what could be more important than knowing him.

What could be better than being in his thoughts, covered by his protection, enlightened by his knowledge, embraced by his love and serving in his cause.

John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

But on the flip side of that same idea, Peter uses negative words: “ineffective meaning “useless” and “unproductive” an agricultural term meaning “no fruit.”

If you don't possess these qualities in increasing measure it means that your life will be wasted.

Think about it, it is so easy to give our lives to enticements, amusements, to chasing some emotional or material mirage, to giving ourselves to things that don't ultimately satisfy but in fact destroy.

How can those things possibly compare to the soul satisfying experience of being loved by God and being in his company.

What are you going to give the rest of your life to?

Matthew 6:19-20 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

**Now look at the second thing that will happen if you possess these qualities in increasing measure:**

2 Peter 1:10-11 “For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

There are two sides to this as well:

“You will never fall”

“And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom...”

It seems quite clear that these two are one issue:

You either fall or you enter.

You either don't or you do enter into the eternal Kingdom with God when you die.

So Peter ties both a purposeful, fruitful life (of v8) AND entrance into the presence of God when we die (of v10) to what?

To possessing these qualities in increasing measure.

How important is this matter of verses 5-7, of actually becoming more like Jesus?

The Bible says it is a matter of life and death.

If I'm saved by grace, does it matter how I live?

Hebrews 10:26-29 “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

But Peter says you will be effective and productive in this life AND you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal Kingdom.

Why? Because of both the grace of verses 1-4 and the grace of verses 5-7.

We are soon going to look at that grace in verses in 5-7 but on the way I want to take you through verse 10.

“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.”

This matter of holy living is serious.

So Peter says, I want you to be all the more eager.”

I want you to make every effort; I want you to make this your highest priority in life.

Can you imagine this is more important than a job, or which school you will attend, or whom you marry, or even your physical health?

We are commanded to make every effort toward something – toward what?

“Making our calling and election sure.”

“Calling” and “election” are two technical terms referring to God’s actions in choosing us for himself.

God has summoned us – it is all of grace.

But Peter says I want you to make that grace-work in your life “sure.”

That means I want you to ratify it, to validate the relationship; I want you to prove its genuineness by your lives.

You don’t earn your relationship with God by being a certain kind of person, but when you have been given a real relationship with God by grace, you will increasingly become a certain kind of person.

Jesus said it this way, Matthew 7:17, 20 “Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit... Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.



Not only does godly living demonstrate **to others** the genuineness of your faith, but also, as I pointed out just a couple of weeks ago, it demonstrates it **to you**.

Nothing will make a Christian doubt his relationship with God faster than disobedience.

One man said, “I got into such sin as a Christian that I forgot that I was saved and the anxiety and the fear of hell were so severe in my life that I wound up (nearly) insane because of that anxiety. Only now in my life when I have begun to put into practice the commitment to be obedient to God's Word no matter what the cost, do I have the rest and the confidence that I know Christ... I see God at work in my life and I know now that I'm saved. And as long as I'm faithful, I have that confidence.” (MacArthur sermon GC1397 )

Therefore, Peter says, I want you to make every effort to make your calling and election sure.

God's grace and our effort are not contradictions.

The grace that **gives** us new birth is the grace that **grows** us in Christ is the same grace that **takes** us to be with God when we die.

The grace that regenerates is the grace that sanctifies is the grace that glorifies.

The whole Bible is consistent on this theme – faith and works are indispensable elements of the same gracious work of God in our lives.

Works don't produce faith but faith always produces works.

**Now finally we come back to what Peter says we are to do in light of the truth of verses 1-4:**

2 Peter 1:5-7 “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”

Here is Peter's command to **work** at your Christian faith.

Please notice, it **isn't** first of all things we **don't** do.

It is not a list of actions so much as a list of characteristics.

To be sure those characteristics evidence themselves in actions but it is possible to go through the motions of many good things without it coming from the heart.

As in the rest of Scripture we are called to change from the inside out.

After studying it rather thoroughly, I'm convinced the list is not to be understood as doing one thing and then doing the next.

It is called a "chain list" but it is only a literary device to emphasize the connectedness of all the characteristics.

We are to grow in Christ-likeness in all respects.

I want to very briefly tell you what each of these characteristics is but I don't want you to get lost in the minutia.

What I want most for you and me today is a growing desire, commitment and, yes, a choice to putting effort into being more like Jesus.

**"Faith"** is probably a reference to our trust in Jesus.

Peter says I want you to build on that.

**"Goodness"** is moral excellence; reflecting the character of Jesus

**"Knowledge"** is a growing understanding of God's will and ways for us to follow.

This is found in God's revelation of himself in his Word.

A Christ-follower is a man or woman who eats, breathes and sleeps the Word of God.

**"Self-control"** is to be actively engaged in refusing the passions that would lead us to disobedience.

It is refusing greed, lust and other evil desires contrary to Christ's way.

It is with a fearful awareness that left to ourselves we would pursue many other things.

And so we pray as Jesus taught us, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”

And self-control is to be willfully doing the right things that build up spiritual muscle.

The Apostle Paul said it this way: 1 Corinthians 9:25 “Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. **They** do it to get a crown that will not last; but **we** do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. <sup>27</sup> No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. Self- control

### “Perseverance;

In the Greek lexicon “perseverance” is “the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and godliness; (unswerved) by even the greatest trials and sufferings.” (Thayer in Kistemaker, 252)

It’s the person who is so convinced of God’s promises that we’re willing to wait even when the present seems completely unpromising!

Hebrews 12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

“**Godliness** is not just a general goodness but a proper respect for God and things and beings related to God as evidenced in our actions.

This is a loyalty to God above all else.

It is being fully conscious of God in all circumstances.

John Calvin’s motto was “Coram Dao” meaning “in the presence of God.”

It is Matthew 6:33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

It is the Lord’s Prayer: Matthew 6:10 “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”

In 1729 William Law wrote, “He, therefore, is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God, who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of (godliness), by doing everything in the Name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to God’s glory.” (William Law *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, chapter 1) **Godliness**

“**Brotherly kindness** is very simply a choice to treat other believers with affection, even the cranky, difficult to get-along-with ones.

And “**Love**” is a love for all.

Though it is not void of feeling, this “love” is a virtue not an emotion; it is acting in loving ways toward another.

In 1 Corinthians 13 we are shown how love acts not just how it feels – it is kind, forgiving, hopes, and protects.

Wow! What a list! Peter says this is what a Christian is.

It is one who has been **saved** by grace and by that same grace is **being changed**.

Some have trouble with the kind of teaching I have given here.

They want to know if I think we are only saved if we exhibit these characteristics and that if we don’t exhibit them we aren’t truly Christian?

And I would answer that is exactly what I think the Bible teaches.

Please notice I didn’t say we are saved **by** exhibiting these characteristics.

The Bible teaches these complementary truths:

God elects and I must believe.

God preserves to the end and I must persevere to the end.

God gives growth in godliness and I must make every effort to supplement my faith with godliness.

No place are **God's gracious actions** on our behalf **AND our response** to God's gracious actions stated more clearly than in Philippians 2:12-13

“Therefore, my dear friends...continue to **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you** to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

So with Holy Scripture I must believe Hebrews 12:14 “without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

And with the Apostle Peter I must believe, “make every effort to add to your faith, goodness, etc.”

One pastor wrote, “True, **saving faith** is confirmed by the reality and vitality of the graces that attend it. **Genuine faith** is not an empty, hollow, void, isolated thing. Indeed, it is full *of*, it is accompanied *by*, it is adorned *with* those virtues that God has ordained and that the Holy Spirit produces. The **reality** of faith is confirmed by the fruit it produces. (From Tom Ferrell, Arlington Presbyterian Church 2 Peter 1:8-9)

That ought to trouble some of us greatly!

Are you making **every effort**; are you **all the more eager** to make your calling and election sure?

Now for the ones, who truly care to follow Christ, we love the fact that Peter said, “If you possess these qualities **in increasing measure**” and he didn't say if you are perfect in these.

We wish that our growth in Christ-likeness were a series of crisis experiences wherein “holiness” were infused into us.

Rather growth is a process not a crisis. (Davids, 184)

How about it, are you ready to give attention to knowing and emulating Jesus?

Will you make it your life's passion?

I close with this quote, “Are you making every effort to increase your knowledge of God's character and his will? Are you making every effort to strengthen your power of self-control? Are you making every effort to enlarge your capacity for (perseverance)? Are you making every effort to cultivate godliness to develop a heart for God? Are you

making every effort to grow warm in your affection for your fellow believers? And are you making every effort to stir up love in your will for the person you dislike the most? If these things are in you and increasing, you will not be fruitless (v. 8), you will never (fall) (v. 10), and you will enter the eternal kingdom of Christ (v. 11). (Piper from 2 Peter)

### **Other Notes on this passage:**

“Show by the kind of life you lead that you have truly accepted God’s call, with all its implications.” (Hillyer, 169)

Assurance comes in greater measure as we see the evidence of God’s work in our lives.

An absence of Christ’s character makes us weak and doubtful.

Jesus had something to say about priorities:

Matthew 6:26-33 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’<sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.<sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

From Doug Moo (p58)

1. Make certain you are a Christian, that your faith is in Jesus alone and that that faith includes repentance – a turning from yourself to follow Jesus.
2. Use all the means at your disposal to cultivate the Spirit’s power in our lives. Utilize the “means of grace” – baptism, Lord’s Supper, study of God’s Word, prayer, worship, and Christian fellowship – helping each other in our walk with Christ.
3. Take responsibility to act. We know it is God in us, but we are to act.

“God gives the inward capacity which make everything possible; without that we can do nothing and we are not asked to do anything. But having been given and having received that gift, then nothing is more important than that we should give ourselves with all our energy to spiritual culture and to the development of the Christian life.” (Lloyd-Jones, 25)

“*Since* God has given power for godliness, strive to become godly! This is the heart of New Testament ethics. We labor for virtue *because* God has already labored for us and is at work in us. Don't ever reverse the order, lest you believe another gospel (which is no gospel). Never say, "I will work out my salvation *in order that* God might work in me." But say with the apostle Paul, "I work out my salvation *for* it is God who works in me to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Never say, "I press on to make it my own *in order that* Christ might make me his own." But say with Paul, "I press on to make it my own *because* Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12). There is a world of difference in a marriage where the husband doubts the love of his wife and labors to earn it, and a marriage where the husband rests in the certainty of his wife's love and takes pains joyfully not to live unworthily of it. Peter's point is: God is *for* us with divine power. Of that we may be sure. Now, in the confidence of that power, take pains not to live unworthily of his LOVE.” (Piper, “Confirm Your Election”, 1982 sermon)

**Commentary on 2 Peter 2:9.** “But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.”

This is the negative side of the positive in V8.

If we do not grow in these virtues, it is indicative that we have forgotten (or considered insignificant, or thought we did when we didn't) the benefits of 1:1-4 and have returned to our former way of life, living as if it doesn't make any difference.

“If anyone” is hypothetical

**As in Hebrews 10:26-29** “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,

<sup>27</sup> but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

<sup>28</sup> Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

<sup>29</sup> How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

**And Hebrews 6:4-9** “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,

<sup>5</sup> who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age,

<sup>6</sup> if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

<sup>7</sup> Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God.

<sup>8</sup> But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

<sup>9</sup> Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation.

**And Matthew 7:17-20**

“Nearsighted” - squinting against the light. “Blind” is a common expression for those unwilling to see or appreciate the truth. The two words together might mean, “They are so short-sighted they can’t see.” (Davids, 186)

*Refusing to see what God says about following Jesus and living like him AND so taken with their own desires that they can’t see the truth of what their salvation means.*

“Has forgotten” is not accidental but culpable – by refusing to see and engage in growth the person is turning their back on what they had previously said about their relationship with Jesus.

At baptism they said, I belong to Jesus but in fact they belong to themselves.

Is “cleansed from past sins a reference to baptism – “That is the act of Christian initiation, by which we mean that complex of (1) repentance from our past independence of God (including our specific acts of rebellion), (2) commitment to Christ as Lord, (3) the expression of this commitment in baptism, and (4) God’s sealing of this commitment through the gift of the Holy Spirit...” (Davids, 186-7)