

THE INCENTIVES FOR ADDING THE SPIRITUAL QUALITIES OF II PETER 1:5-7

You probably already know from the verses I have in the **bulletin**—and from the **outline** that you have in your hand—that we are going back to our study of II Peter. Let's turn there. Since it's been awhile—7 weeks to be exact—I want to start off with some reminders of what we've looked at before Christmas.

The book of II Peter contains 3 chapters. If you thoughtfully read over the book 3-4 times, you would see that chapter 1 is about spiritual growth, chapter 2 is about false prophets, and chapter 3 is about the return of Christ. Based on that, I believe **the theme** of II Peter is something like this:

"Pursue spiritual growth to protect yourself from error—and to be prepared for Christ's return." Based on this theme, I **entitled this series**: "II Peter in Three Words: Working, Warning, and Watching."

Speaking of **warning**, I'm going to have a **longer-than-normal** review this morning for a couple of reasons.

1) First, because—as already mentioned—it has been almost 2 months since the last sermon from II Peter.
2) Second, because the first couple of verses **introduce the whole book** and highlight what Peter is going to be talking about. Because of that, a good understanding of the **beginning verses** will help us understand the book as a whole.

Verse 1.

Here we see that Peter is **writing to** fellow believers—those who have "obtained like precious faith." The faith Peter is referring to is **saving** faith. They **had received forgiveness of sins** and were now children of God—and heaven-bound—because they had been **given** salvation. It **wasn't earned**; they **obtained it** as a gift! Eph 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God:** ⁹ **Not of works**, lest any man should boast."

How did they obtain saving faith? The last part of the verse says, "through the **righteousness** of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

What is "the righteousness of God"? I like to think of it as "**rightness with God**." Our sin makes us "not right" with God. It separates us from God and **disqualifies us** from heaven.

The only way to **become qualified** for heaven—and spend eternity with a perfect, sin-hating God—is to **get rid of** our past sin—and **to become** perfect! Even though it is **impossible for us** to do that, people still try.

People do all kinds of things—the Bible calls them **works**—to try to get rid of their past sins. They get baptized as a baby...and confirmed at a certain age...and try to treat people the way they wanted to be treated...and give money...and read their Bibles...and say prayers (instead of praying) ...and join a church...and try to serve God—all in hopes that **their efforts** to get right with God **will be accepted** by God.

What does **God say** about efforts of **self-righteousness**? God plainly says that people that do that are **ignorant of His way** to become righteous—and are trying to **establish their own way** to become righteous. We see that in **Romans 10:3** "For they being **ignorant of God's righteousness**, and **going about to establish their own righteousness**, have not **submitted themselves unto the righteousness** of God."

Simply put, **God has a way** for us to become right with Him—and **people have a way** that they think they can become right with Him! Pretty crazy to think that we would **choose our way over** God's way, but sadly most people do just that!

--That's why **Proverbs 14:12** says, "There is a way **which seemeth right** unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." And that's why Jesus said in **Mt 7:13** "...for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that **leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:**"

What is **God's way** for us to become righteous? **Romans 10:4** "For **Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth."

--Christ did not "end" the law by getting rid of the law—He perfectly kept the law!

--And because He lived a perfect life, He **could die** as our substitute. Not only **could He die** as our substitute—He **did die** as our substitute! But does that mean **everyone goes to heaven**?

No it doesn't! The end of Romans 10:3 says we need to **submit ourselves** to God's way to become righteous. We need to **recognize our sinfulness**—and the foolishness of trying to make ourselves righteous—and come to Jesus in repentance and faith. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one **that believeth!**

What happens when we do that? God counts our sin as **being paid for by Jesus**—and credits Jesus' **perfectness as belonging to us!** That is what Peter is referring to in vs 1 when he says "them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God..."

What **about you?** Have you submitted yourself to God's way to become right with Him—or are you still trying to establish **your own way** to become right with Him?

So this book is to believers—born again, blood-bought, forgiven and heaven-bound children of God!

Now vs 2. Here we see that **Peter's desire**—which is ultimately **God's desire**—is that believers would have **grace and peace** be multiplied to them. But **grace and peace** are gifts from God—and only God **can multiply** them! They can be **multiplied**, though—they can **grow**—through the knowledge of God. Knowledge here does **not mean a head** knowledge. It does not involve **gathering facts about** God—it involves **knowing God** on a **personal** level. I'll expand on that more in a little bit.

--In vs 3, Peter reminds them that **God's divine power** has provided all that we need for life and godliness. In other words, eternal life—and spiritual growth—come from God!

--But...according to **vs 4**, **growth** in Christ-likeness—and **escaping** our sinfulness—does not happen

automatically. We need to know—and apply—the **great and precious promises** contained in God's Word!

Now vs 5. "And beside this"—meaning **for this very reason**—there is something we need **to do!** Because we are saved—and even though God has **given us everything** we need for godliness—there is still something we **need to do!** What are we **to do?** What is our **responsibility?**

We are to **add** the seven **"ingredients"** listed in verses 5-7 to the foundation of our faith.

And let's not forget that this "adding" **is not "sprinkling"** a little in like you would salt.

"Add" carries the idea of **lavishly, abundantly supplying** these things to our lives!

What happens when **we do** that? What are the **benefits** of doing that? In **vs 8**, God makes certain **promises** to those who work diligently at adding these qualities to their lives.

But before the promises, there are...**1. The prerequisites to obtaining the promises**

There are prerequisites—there are things we **need to do**—in order for these promises to become ours. What is it that we need **to do?**

--Vs 8 "For if these things **be in you, and abound...**"

What things? The spiritual qualities listed in vs 5-7! We are to lavishly supply to our faith—meaning our Christian lives—these seven characteristics.

We are to work diligently at having **virtue** (meaning moral excellence, upright living) ...and **knowledge** (meaning applying what we know to our lives) ...and **temperance** (meaning self-control) ... and **patience** (meaning perseverance) ... and **godliness** (meaning reverence and respect to God) ... and **brotherly kindness** (meaning a care and concern for fellow believers) ... and **charity** (meaning love for others).

They are **not to just** be in us, though—they **are to abound!** They are to be **plentiful and increasing**—not just barely there!

God through Peter wants to make sure **we get this!** It is an **absolute must** that we work on our relationship with God **once we have** a relationship with God! We can't "sit in the canoe" and let the river of life take us where it wants to—we need to be working on growing in Christ-likeness!

--We see that in vs 5 "giving **all diligence...**"

--We see it here in vs 8 "For if these things **be in you, and abound...**"

--We see it again in vs 10 "...give **diligence** to make your calling and election sure..."

And Peter ends the book with these words: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." The message is unmistakably clear—God wants His children to work at **growing spiritually!**

Vs 8. The first promise is... A. We will not have a barren (ineffective) relationship with Christ

When we hear the word “barren,” we think of something like an animal that ***does not produce offspring***—or a plant that does not ***produce fruit***. But that sounds a lot like ***unfruitful***, doesn’t it? So is Peter saying in vs 8 that we will not be “unfruitful”—***twice?***

I don't think so. The Greek word that **barren** comes from has a couple of different meanings: "idle" (as in unemployed) and "lazy"—or "useless" and "unproductive" (BAGD, 104). It is used by Jesus in Mt 20 in the parable about hiring "idle" workers. But it is also used in **James 2:20** "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is **dead?**" Faith without works is **ineffective**... it is **useless**...it is **unprofitable**.

I believe this second meaning—being *ineffective* (Schreiner) and *useless*—is how Peter is using it here. We won't be *ineffective* or *useless* in what? "...the **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As already mentioned, **knowledge** does not mean simply gathering facts **about** Jesus. Instead, it is a **personal, relational** kind of knowledge. It is knowing Christ as a friend knows a friend.

The promise, then, is that we will ***not have an ineffective relationship*** with Christ. Stated another way, God promises that if we pursue spiritual growth, we will have an ***effective—a useful—***relationship with Christ.

What does that **look like?** Here's an illustration that I hope will help. To the best of my knowledge, my **biological father**—if he is still alive—lives in California. My relationship with him is based **solely on sharing DNA**—that's it! I do not have his phone number...or his address. I don't call him for advice...or for a sounding board...or even to "chit-chat." If I needed financial help...or physical help...or spiritual counsel, I wouldn't try to get in touch with him. I last saw him 38 years ago and it is doubtful I will ever see him again.

That is what you would call an *ineffective, unhelpful, useless* relationship. We have a relationship—*by blood*—but it has zero impact on our lives. We are *basically strangers* to one another.

Contrast that with the father-son relationship Art and Don have.

--They ***see each*** other every day.

--They **talk to** one another every day.

--They ***share meals*** together every day.

--They **look out** for one another's health.

--They **fix** things together...and **fish** together...and **serve** the Lord in church together...and **work** together.

--They **read the Bible** together...and **pray together**...and **share advice** with one another.

I think you'd agree that that is an **effective...**and **helpful...**and **useful...**and **profitable** relationship. So...**which one** describes your relationship with God?

One in ***name only***—that has ***zero impact*** on your daily life; ***OR*** one that is truly “friend with friend?” God ***desires*** that we have a ***close father-child*** relationship with Him. Not only that, but ***He promises we will*** have that kind of relationship with Him if we diligently pursue the spiritual qualities listed in verses 5-7.

Do you have that kind of relationship with God? If not, it is because ***you are not diligently*** and wholeheartedly working on it!

Promise #1? We *will not have* an ineffective relationship with Christ.

Promise #2? B. We will not have an unfruitful relationship with Christ

We see that promise in vs 8 as well: “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren **nor unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Unfruitful means exactly what we think of when we hear the word—**without fruit!** The fruit, though, is not **physical** fruit—like apples or oranges. Instead, Peter is referring to **spiritual** fruit—the fruit of the Spirit produced in our lives by the Holy Spirit.

It shouldn't be surprising that if we **pursue the spiritual qualities** listed in vss 5-7 that these spiritual qualities **will become evident** in our lives. In other words, they will be seen!

And that could very well be a distinction Peter is making between these two promises. Having an **effective** relationship with God benefits **us**; having a **fruitful** relationship with God benefits **others**.

What about **you**? Have those that are close to you seen a difference in you since you became a child of God?

Is there **evidence** in your life that the Holy Spirit is **producing Christ-like** qualities in your life—or are you **unfruitful**? In order to have a life that bears **spiritual** fruit, we need to keep the spiritual weeds out! But that's not enough, is it? We need to **nurture** our spiritual life; we need to do **some watering and fertilizing!**

But what happens **if we don't do** that? What happens if **we disobey** this command and don't work hard at adding to our faith? What happens—besides having an **ineffective** and **unfruitful** relationship with God?

In vs 9, we see... **3. God's pronouncements against those who fail to pursue spiritual growth**
First, **A. They are blind.** "But he that lacketh these things is blind..."

What does it **mean** to be blind? God through Peter is talking in **spiritual** terms, of course. But He uses a **physical** handicap to help us understand a **spiritual** truth. A blind person **fails to see beauty**—and a blind person **fails to see danger**. And that is what happens to those who fail to pursue spiritual growth. They won't **see the good that God does**; they won't recognize the kindness and mercy that God gives on a daily basis. And they won't see the **dangers and pitfalls** of living a disobedient life. So they will fall—**hard and often!**

And let's not miss the fact that God is not saying they **will become** blind. It says **they are** currently blind—meaning **right now**.

What about you? If you neglect to grow spiritually, you are blind right now!
Not only that, God says... **B. They are short-sighted**

Some of you might be thinking—and rightly so: 'If you're blind, you can't see **at all** so of course you can't see **afar off!**' **Physically** speaking, you are one or the other! But... **spiritually** speaking...we can be both **blind**—and short-sighted—at the same time!

In fact, the two really go hand-in-hand! If you **can't see afar off**—if you only think about the here and now and don't have an eternal perspective, you are **blind** to what is important. And if you are **blind to what is important**, it is because you are only considering the "here and now!"

Jesus reminds us in the parable of the sower what happens when we focus on the here and now.
Mark 4:19 "And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh **unfruitful**."

What **about you?** Do you think about eternity—or only the "here and now?" If you are only thinking about this life—and not the next one—you are short-sighted! How do you **correct** short-sightedness? Diligently work at abundantly supply these spiritual qualities to your life like God wants you to do!

If we don't, God's pronouncement on us is that we are blind, short-sighted, and... **C. They are forgetful**
We see that in the last phrase of vs 9 "...and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old [former] sins."

Once again, we have the reminder that Peter is talking to **believers**. **Unbelievers** aren't purged—**meaning cleansed**—from their sins. And **unbelievers** aren't called "brethren" like Peter calls them in the beginning of vs 10.

But how can a **true believer forget** that they have been forgiven? Do they really develop **amnesia** and lose the ability **to recall** that they had been cleansed from their sins?

The idea Peter is conveying is not that they fail to **recall** being forgiven as much as it is failing to **appreciate** being forgiven. I'm not going to have you turn there, but we have a very heart-touching picture of this in Ezekiel 16. God compares the nation of Israel as a **newborn baby girl** that was cast out in an open field **to die**. He comes along and picks her up...and cleans her up...and clothes her and feeds her. He doesn't just provide for **her needs**, though—He **treats her as a princess!** As she grows up, she is dressed in fine linen and silk. She is given bracelets...and earrings...and necklaces...and a crown.

What a wonderful picture of what God does for us! We are helpless...and hopeless...and can't save ourselves. We will die in our sin—unforgiven—unless God **in His mercy** saves us! And so He **offers to us His Son as our Savior** and when we receive the gift of His Son, we receive forgiveness. But not just forgiveness! We also receive **sonship**. We are adopted into His family and made a child of His—**a child of the King!**

But—sadly—we sometimes do what the grown-up-baby-girl-turned-princess did. What was that?

Instead of staying true to the One who loved her and did so much for her, she left Him and pursued other lovers.

And God says to her in **Ezekiel 16:22** “And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou **hast not remembered the days of thy youth**, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.”

What about us? Can we **take for granted**—can **we underappreciate**—what God has done for us when He forgave us? We can, can’t we?

--That’s why we have songs like “Lead Me to Calvary.” Here’s the refrain:

*“Lest I forget Gethsemane, Lest I forget thine agony,
Lest I forget Thy love for me, Lead me to Calvary.”*

--That’s why Jesus wants us to observe the Lord’s Supper: “this do in remembrance of me.”

--And that’s why God warn us here in II Peter 1:9 that if we fail to pursue spiritual growth, we have forgotten—we are not appreciating—that we have been cleansed from our sins.

Thomas Schreiner put it like this: “Those who treasure being forgiven live in a way that pleases God.” (304)

What about you? Are you living in a way that pleases God?

PRAY

So what would God have us do in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, every one of us is in one of two groups. What are the two groups?

--You are either trying to establish your own way to be righteous—to be right with God;

OR --You have submitted to God’s way to become righteous. That’s it; there is no third category!

According to I John 5:12, you either have the Son and have eternal life—or don’t have the Son and don’t have eternal life.

--If you have questions about that—or if you realize here this morning that need to submit to God’s way to become right with Him—please let me know. I would be glad to do what I can to answer your questions and explain how you can become a child of God.

2. Second, be honest as you evaluate your spiritual life. Are you diligently pursuing spiritual growth?

If you are, God promises that you will have an effective and fruitful relationship with Him.

But if you aren’t pursuing spiritual growth, you won’t have that kind of relationship.

Not only that, but God says of you that you are blind...and short-sighted...and forgetful.

You don’t have to remain in that state, though. Confess your waywardness as sin—and come back to God!

Don’t get to the end of your life—which may be sooner than you realize—and say, “I’ll Wish I Had Given Him More.” Give Him your all now!