

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - March 3, 2022

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Title: "Knowing and Growing in Christ"

Scripture Reference: 2 Peter 1:1-11

Comment: For those of you who have sat under my preaching and teaching for one, two or more decades, you have heard me say consistently that Spiritual Growth is NOT an option! This Study will reiterate that biblical truth.

I. Introduction

A. In his first epistle, Peter emphasized the grace of God (1 Peter 5:12), but in this second letter, his emphasis is on the knowledge of God.

B. The word **know** or **knowledge** is used at least fifteen times in this epistle. The word does not mean a mere intellectual understanding of some truth, though that is included.

C. It means a living participation in the truth in the sense that our Lord used it in John 17:3 - "**And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**"

D. Peter opened his letter with a description of the Christian life. Before he described the counterfeits, he described the true believers.

Point: The best way to detect falsehood is to understand the characteristics of the truth.

E. Peter made three important affirmations about the true Christian life, which we shall now address.

**II. Exposition [Part I] - The Christian Life Begins With Faith
[2 Peter 1:1-4]**

A. Peter called it "like **precious faith**." It means that our standing with the Lord today is the same as that of the apostles centuries ago.

B. They had no special advantage over us simply because they were privileged to walk with Christ, see Him with their own eyes, and share in His miracles.

Comment: It is not necessary to see the Lord with our human eyes in order to love Him, trust Him, and share His glory (1 Peter 1:8).

C. From the very beginning of his letter, Peter affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ. "God" and "Our Savior" are not two different Persons; they describe One Person, Jesus Christ.

D. Peter reminded his readers that Jesus Christ is the Savior by repeating this in 2 Peter 1:11, 2:20, 3:2, and 3:18.

E. A **savior** is "one who brings salvation," and the word **salvation** was familiar to the people of that day. In their vocabulary, it meant "deliverance from trouble," particularly "deliverance from the enemy." It also carried the idea of "health and safety."

F. A physician was looked on as a savior because he helped deliver the body from pain. It requires very little insight to see how the title "Savior" applies to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is certainly the Great Physician who heals the heart from the sickness of sin. He is the victorious conqueror who has defeated our enemies - sin, death, Satan, and hell.

G. Our Lord Jesus Christ has three "**spiritual**" blessings that can be secured from nobody else: **righteousness**, **grace**, and **peace**.

H. When you trust Him as your Savior, His righteousness becomes your righteousness and you are given a right standing before God (2 Cor. 5:21). We could never earn this righteousness; it is the gift of God to those who believe. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5)

I. **Grace** is God's favor to the undeserving. God in His mercy does not give us what we deserve; God in His grace gives us what we don't deserve. Our God is "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10), and he bestows that grace upon us through Jesus Christ (John 1:16).

J. The result of this experience is peace, peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and the peace of God (Phil. 4:6-7).

K. This faith that Peter is talking about involves God's power (2 Peter 1:3). The Christian life begins with saving faith in Jesus Christ. When you know Jesus personally, you also experience God's power, and this power produces "life and godliness."

L. When you are born into the family of God by faith in Christ, you are born complete. God gives you everything you will ever need "for life and godliness." "And ye are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10).

M. Just as a baby has a definite genetic structure that determines how he or she will grow, so also the believer is "genetically structured" to experience "glory and virtue."

N. One day we will be like the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2). We have been "Called ... to His eternal glory" (1 Peter 5:10), and we shall share that glory when Jesus Christ returns and takes His people to heaven.

Point: We should not wait until we get to heaven to become like Jesus! In our character and conduct, we should reveal His beauty and grace each day.

O. The faith that Peter speaks of is also the faith that involves God's promises (v 4). These promises are great because they come from a great God and they lead to a great life.

P. They are precious because their value is beyond calculation!

Comment: Peter must have liked the word precious because he wrote about the "precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:1); the "precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:4); the "precious blood" (1 Peter 1:19); the "precious stone" (1 Pet. 2:4,6), and the "precious Savior" (1 Pet. 2:7).

Q. Peter also says in 2 Peter 1:4, that along with precious promises, we are also partakers of God's divine nature. Nature **determines appetite**. A pig wants slop, and a dog will eat its own vomit (2 Peter 2:22), but the sheep desires green pastures.

R. Nature also **determines behavior**. An eagle flies because it has an eagle's nature, and a dolphin swims because that is the nature of the dolphin.

S. Nature also **determines environment**: squirrels climb trees, moles burrow underground, and trout swim in the water.

T. Nature also **determines association**: lions travel in prides, sheep in flocks, fish in schools.

U. If nature determines appetite, and we have God's nature within us, then we ought to have an appetite for that which is pure and holy. Our behavior ought to be like that of the Father, and we ought to live in the kind of spiritual environment that is suited to our nature.

V. We ought to associate with that which is true to our nature (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14ff).

Points:

- 1) The only normal fruit-bearing life for the child of God is a godly life !
- 2) If we feed the new nature the nourishment of the Word of God, then we will have little interest in the garbage of the world.
- 3) However, if we "make provision for the flesh" (Rom. 13:14), our sinful nature will lust after the "old sins" (2 Peter 1:9) and we will disobey God.

Godly living is the result of cultivating the new nature within!

III. Exposition [Part II] - Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Peter 1:5-7)

A. Where there is life, there must be growth. The new birth is not the end: it is the beginning.

B. God gives His children everything that is needed to live a godly life, but we must apply ourselves and be diligent to use the "means of grace" he has provided.

Point: Spiritual growth is **NOT** automatic! It requires cooperation with God, a surrendered life to the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the application of spiritual diligence and discipline.

"Work out your own salvation (not work for salvation) with fear and trembling, For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure ." (Philippians 2:12b-13)

C. Peter listed seven characteristics of the godly life but we should not think of them as seven stages of development. The word translated **add** in verse 5 means "to supply generously." In other words, we develop one quality as we exercise another quality.

D. These qualities or graces, relate to each other the way the branch relates to the trunk and the twigs to the branch.

E. Like the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23), these qualities grow out of life and out of a vital relationship with Jesus Christ.

F. The first quality of Character Peter listed is **virtue**. We see this word first in verse 3, and it basically means "excellence." To the Greek Philosophers, it meant "the fulfillment of a thing."

G. When anything in nature fulfills its purpose, that is "virtue - moral excellence."

Point: A Christian is supposed to glorify God because he or she has God's nature within; as a result, when we do this, we show "excellence" because we are fulfilling our purpose in life.

H. Faith helps us develop virtue, and virtue helps us develop the

second quality, **knowledge** (2 Peter 1:5). The word translated **knowledge** in verses 2 and 3 means "full knowledge" or "knowledge that is growing."

1. The word used here suggests practical knowledge or discernment. It refers to the ability to handle life successfully.

2. This kind of knowledge does not come automatically. It comes from obedience to the will of God (John 7:17).

I. The third quality of spiritual virtue is **temperance**, and it means self-control. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). Also consider: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." (Prov. 25:28).

J. The fourth quality of spiritual virtue is **patience**. This is the ability to endure when circumstances are difficult.

Comments:

- 1) **Self-control** has to do with handling the *pleasures of life*, while **patience** relates primarily to the *pressures and problems of life*.
- 2) The ability to endure problems and problem people is "long-suffering."
- 3) Often, the person who "gives in" to pleasures is not disciplined enough to handle pressures either, so they "give up."

K. Patience is not something that develops automatically; we must work at it. James 1:2-8 gives us the right approach. We must expect trials to come but we must by faith, allow our trials to work for us and not against us.

Point: Nobody enjoys trials, but we can rejoice in the confidence we have in God, knowing that while we are going through our trials, God is at work, causing everything to work together for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

L. The fifth quality is **Godliness**. This simply means "God-likeness." In the original Greek, this word meant "to worship well." It described the man who was right in his relationship with God and with his fellow man.

1. The words reverence and piety come closer to defining this term.
2. It is that quality of Character that makes a person distinctive. They live above the petty things of life.
3. This person seeks to do the will of God and, as they do, they seek the welfare of others.

M. **Brotherly kindness** (*philadelphia* in the Greek) is the sixth virtue that Peter must have acquired the hard way because the disciples of our Lord often debated and disagreed with one another. If we love Jesus, we must also love the brethren.

1. We should practice an "unfeigned (sincere) love of the brethren (1 Peter 1:22) and not just pretend that we love them. (See Heb. 13:1; Rom. 12:10; 1 John 5:1-2).

N. But there is more to Christian growth than brotherly love; we must also have this seventh quality, and that is **sacrificial love** that our Lord displayed when he went to the cross.

O. That kind of love ("charity") spoken of in verse 7 is **agape love**. This is the love that is described in 1 Corinthians 13, the love that the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts as we walk in the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).

P. When we have *brotherly* love, we love because of our likeness to others; but with **agape** love, we love in spite of the differences we have.

Point: It is impossible for fallen human nature to manufacture these seven qualities of Christian Character. They **must be produced by the Spirit of God!**

Q. Because we have the divine nature, we can grow spiritually and develop this kind of Christian Character. It is through the power of God and the precious promises of God that growth takes place.

R. Here is something amazing: As the image of Christ is reproduced in us, the process does not destroy our own personalities. We still remain uniquely ourselves.

IV. Exposition [Part III] - Spiritual Growth Brings Practical Results [2 Peter 1:8-11]

A. How can you as a believer in Christ, be certain that you are growing spiritually? Peter gave three evidences of true spiritual growth.

1. **Fruitfulness** (1:8)
2. **Vision** (1:9)
3. **Security** (1:10-11)

B. **Fruitfulness** (1:8) - Christian Character is an end in itself, but it is also a means to an end. The more we become like Christ, the more the Spirit can use us as a witness and in service for the Lord.

Point: The believer who is not growing is idle ("barren") and unfruitful. His or her knowledge of Jesus Christ is producing nothing practical in life.

Comment: The word translated *idle* also means "ineffective."

C. **Vision** (1:9) - The unsaved person is in the dark because Satan

has blinded their mind (2 Cor. 4:3-4). A person has to be born again before their eyes are opened and they can see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

D. After our eyes are opened, it is important that we increase our vision and see all that God wants us to see. The phrase **cannot see afar off** is the translation of a word that means "shortsighted." It is the picture of someone closing or squinting their eyes, unable to see at a distance.

E. There are some Christians who see only their own church, or their own denomination, and they fail to see the greatness of God's family around the world. Some believers see the needs at home but have no vision for a lost world. Jesus admonished His disciples, "**Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.**" (John 4:35).

F. Peter's third evidence of true spiritual growth is **Security** (1 Peter 1:10-11). If we walk around with our eyes closed, we will stumble. But the growing Christian walks with confidence because he or she knows that they are secure in Christ.

Points:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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!

G. Peter points out in 1 Peter 1:10 that "calling" and "election" go together. The same God who **elects** His people also ordains the means to **call** them. The two must go together.

H. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "... God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the

Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:13b-14).

I. The Christian who is sure of his election and calling will never "stumble" but will prove by a consistent life that they are a true child of God.

V. Summary

A. If we display Christian growth and Character in our daily lives, we can be sure that we are converted and will one day be in heaven.

B. The growing Christian can look forward to "an abundant entrance" into the eternal kingdom! The Greeks used this phrase to describe the welcome given to Olympic winners when they returned home.

C. The Christian life begins with faith, but that faith must lead to spiritual growth. Faith leads to growth and growth leads to practical results in life and service.

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the biblical passages that follow by filling in the blank spaces. Each passage has been taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

"Therefore being _____ by _____, we have _____ with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have _____ by _____ into this _____ wherein we stand, and _____ in _____ of the _____ of God."

[Romans 5:1-2]

"Be _____ for nothing, but in every thing by _____ and _____ with _____ let your requests be made

known unto God. And the _____ of God, which _____ all _____, shall keep your _____ and _____ through Christ Jesus."

[Philippians 4:6-7]

"For in him _____ all the _____ of the Godhead _____. And ye are _____ in him, which is the _____ of all _____ and _____."

[Colossians 2:9-10]

"For whom he did _____, he also did _____ to be _____ to the image of his Son, that the might be the _____ among many brethren. Moreover whom he did _____, them he also _____: And whom he called, them he also _____: and whom he justified, them he also _____."

[Romans 8:9-10]

"But the _____ of the Spirit is love, joy, _____, longsuffering, _____, goodness, _____, meekness, _____" against such there is no _____."

[Galatians 5:22-23]

I pray that you have been blessed through this study and you will remember that Spiritual Growth is not an option.

Jude 3
Pastor Austin