

<b>Series:</b> Grow in Grace	<b>Reference:</b> 2 Peter 1:1-15	<b>Title:</b> Living Virtuously	<b>Date:</b> 09.04.2022
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
Purity in Christ is more precious than life! The Church must be diligent in recognizing false teachers & false doctrine while trusting Scripture. By learning to recognize false teachers, we're able to identify those who teach truth & by living into God's Truth we can grow in grace including Christian virtue.			

### COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

The series we begin today is a great followup to our *State of the Union* sermon last week, and a great compliment to our Sonship Study we all begin this week; men on Tuesdays, women on Thursdays from 7:00-8:30p. We will be meeting on the first floor in one of the larger kids rooms. We've moved in some nice couches & chairs for it!

Sonship is a 16 lesson study designed to help you take some of the great theological truths of the gospel you may know in your head & apply them to daily life. We're hoping & praying to have engagement from everyone. We've bought books & podcast files for everyone able to attend! We're asking an investment of \$60/person. The first night will be an overview/how to & when you you will receive your materials. And if you can, just drop your money in the black box on a Sunday morning (honor system). But...if money's tight, just take your stuff, ***we can cover it!*** If you know now that you'll not be able to make certain meetings, no worries, just do those lessons on your own; you'll only miss the interaction of the group discussion for that lesson. If you can't be there this week, ask me today & I will give you the materials now. And I will need everyone's email to send out the link for the podcast files.

As I said, the series we start today is a great follow up to last weeks sermon which I hope you were able to listen to if you weren't here, including the videos - links to them are in the text. This 4 week series on 2 Peter is called *Grow in Grace*.

The Church must be diligent in recognizing false teachers & false doctrine while trusting Scripture. Remember last week George Barna told us only 13% of teaching pastors have a biblical worldview any longer - very alarming. By learning to recognize false teachers, we're able to identify those who actually teach truth & by living into God's Truth we can grow in grace which includes living in Christian virtue.

Open your pew Bibles to p830 & follow along as I read 2 Peter 1:1-15...*"Simon Peter, a servant & apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God & Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: <sup>2</sup>Grace & peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God & of Jesus our Lord. <sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory & goodness. <sup>4</sup>Through these he has given us his very great & precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

Stopping there for a moment, let's reiterate those points. We have everything we need to grow in grace & peace. A gift received from Christ by which we participate with God!

We've escaped the corruption of the world - that word means the decay of a dead body buried in the ground. And now, Peter will explain how we're to live in this to keep that decay at bay, living effectively & productively in Christ - remembering this is all a gift by the power of God through Christ. Remember, this isn't about earning salvation, we don't earn salvation by works - rather it's about sanctification, or being made into Christ-likeness. The power to live this way is to live in the blessed gift of God. He continues...

*5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective & unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But whoever does not have them is nearsighted & blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.*

Stop there for a moment - we can drift away in our thinking & understanding. Knowledge as Peter uses it isn't just head knowledge, but is coupled with knowing Christ as a person - all relationships take effort to sustain them well. Christ will never drop us, once saved always saved, but we want to have a good healthy marriage with Him over time! So, when we tend to forget what we were saved from a lack of gratitude seeps in, and we drift away sometimes searching for another to satisfy, like cheating in a marriage, but Peter will remind us that all we need is at home with Jesus, as we will see. He continues...

*10Therefore, my brothers & sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling & election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ.*

*12So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them & are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things."*

LET'S PRAY...The ermine is "known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything which would soil it. Hunters don't set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home in a cleft in a rock or a hollow in a tree. They smear the entrance & interior with grime. Then set their dogs loose to chase the him home. He flees toward his home but doesn't enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he's trapped by the dogs & captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life."<sup>1</sup>

As Christians, we're called to grow in faithfulness through the virtues found in Scripture,

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<sup>1</sup> Henry G. Bosch, "Holy Blue," *Our Daily Bread*, April 21, 1997, <https://odb.org/1997/04/21/holy-blue/>

practicing them to deepen our faith & trust in God. They're reflective of the God we serve; attributes of His character, the God in whose image we were made.

This tells us doctrine, the set of beliefs held by the Church, or dogma, the set of principles laid down by God's authority & incontrovertibly true, must be held in high regard & practiced well. Or, as we said last week, our theology, what we believe to be true of God & humankind as informed by the Scriptures, and nothing else, is absolutely central to the Christian life!

Because if you begin with wrong assumptions you end with wrong conclusions which is devastating. The Bible is God's Word to us breathed out by Himself through human vessels - our one objective guide. We measure everything as truth or lie against it - and truth sets us free! So we pursue purity of life in these virtues, like the ermine protects its fur. Peter did - he begins this letter using the word for servant which is literally slave in the Greek, putting emphasis on being owned by Jesus Christ & being committed to follow & obey him completely.<sup>2</sup> Even to the point of Peter being martyred, crucified upside down, under the Emperor Nero in AD68 for the sake of Christ's name - purity in Christ more precious than life!

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter is "a farewell letter from the apostle, in which he seeks to combat the teaching of unethical behavior & the denial of the return of Jesus Christ & final judgement."<sup>3</sup> He's attacking false teaching - teaching which seeks to twist theology, doctrine, or dogma into something inconsistent with God. Most scholars date 2 Peter around AD 67.<sup>4</sup> So, he's had a few years to pastor & watch as false teachers arise & lead people astray, and to have experienced the damage that causes.

The specific heresy Peter was attacking was gnosticism which much of the New Testament battles. It basically says you need to have a special knowledge to truly be saved, or walk with God - a spiritual pride deviating from Biblical teaching. But Peter, like any good pastor, says we have all we need through our knowledge of Christ. Modern Gnostic thought's driving movements of social justice & sexuality in some Christians now - claiming you have to be woke, to have a special knowledge or you don't really understand; all based on feeling rather than solid Christian doctrine. Others elevate life in the Holy Spirit this way as well, feeling they alone hear from the Holy Spirit & is why prophecy should be held with an open hand in the context of community knowing that everything must be confirmed in body life - no one person is the authority - that it's very subjective. This is where definitive statements are hurtful, and feeling language is helpful - we don't say, "The Holy Spirit told me..." We say, "I feel like the Holy Spirit is saying...what do you think?" Confirming it in community with other mature Bible believing Christians & against the Scriptures.

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, [A Handbook on the Letter from Jude and the Second Letter from Peter](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 64

<sup>3</sup> P. H. Davids, "2 Peter," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000], 350

<sup>4</sup> "Introduction to 2 Peter," *Blue Letter Bible*, accessed November 4, 2019, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/eo/2Pe/2Pe000.cfm>

Peter immediately begins to tell us, the knowledge of God is ours to obtain through Christ's power in us. "*Grace & peace be multiplied to you*, as it says in the ESV - that we'd have it in abundance, not just added bit by bit, but in a multiplicative fashion. Peter indicates *grace & peace* are ours *in the knowledge of God & Jesus our Lord*. As we know God we gain these essential foundations for salvation & living."<sup>5</sup> The primary way we grow in the knowledge of God is through ingesting His Word - the absolute one objective thing we can rely on - everything else is subjective. The Word of God is written & tangible, whereas our senses & feelings are subjective.

Knowledge also must exhibit itself in behavior; to be lived out, or it's simply ineffective & unproductive. So in verses 5-10, Peter encourages believers to build their faith through right living. Verse 5 uses the word virtue in the ESV, translated as goodness in the NIV, defined as 'behavior shown in high moral standards'. The Church has traditionally recognized seven virtues: faith, hope, love (charity), prudence (wisdom), justice, fortitude (courage), temperance (self-control). Other virtues fall under one of these seven - such as the virtue of humility, which would fall under temperance, or the virtue of patience under fortitude.

The Bible teaches all Christian virtues fall under the two overarching virtues of holiness & love. On holiness David Guzik says, "God is holy in the sense that He's both unique, there's no one else like Him, and is completely free of evil & infinitely good. From this character flows His righteousness wherein He always acts consistently with His moral nature (His holiness). He never breaks the standard of His own holy Law. And finally, He's just & His justice requires all men live in accordance with the Law which He established. Thus, holiness, righteousness & justice - in a creaturely & recitative sense - should characterize the Christian's *disposition*." In other words, lived in word & deed. This is why a social justice or human sexuality movement which largely denies God's biblical moral law isn't a true or good movement, but is inherently damaging.

On love he says, "Love is at the very heart of God & motivates Him to seek the welfare of lost & rebellious sinners. Love acts with the interest of others at heart. Thus, in Christian ethics, love is to be permeated with holiness & holiness with love - they find their fullest expression according to the wisdom God gives us (since you can't be truly loving without a pursuit of godly holiness). Holiness keeps love from turning into idolatry & codependence (which the sexuality & justice movements have done), and love keeps holiness from turning into an aloof, austere judgmentalism. Holy love, therefore, must characterize the Christian who claims to be a disciple of Christ."<sup>6</sup> This is why we say, love without Truth lies, Truth without love kills.

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<sup>5</sup> David Guzik, "2 Peter 1: The Sure Christian Life," *Enduring Word*, 2018, <https://www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-peter-1/>

<sup>6</sup> Greg Herrick, "Virtues Leading to Christlikeness," *Go & Make Disciples of All Nations*, Bible.org, May 11, 2004, <https://www.bible.org/seriespage/8-virtues-leading-christlikeness>

Kevin DeYoung asks... “But why must we grow in grace, making every effort to increase in virtue; earnestly, faithfully, diligently pursuing holiness? He states, the Bible is wonderful because it never gives us just one motivation for obedience. God says more than simply “Because I told you so.” God motivates us from several different angles & based on several different reasons. He writes out a list of twenty motivations found in 2 Peter for a Christian’s pursuit of holiness. They are...

1. We pursue holiness so that we might become partakers of the divine nature (1:4).
2. We make every effort to grow in godliness because God has already set us free from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (1:4).
3. We grow in grace so we will not be ineffective & unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:8).
4. We pursue Christlike character so we will not be blind, having forgotten that we were cleansed from our former sins (1:9).
5. We work hard at holiness in order to make our calling & election sure, so that we will not fall (1:10).
6. We practice these godly qualities so there will be richly provided for us an entrance into the eternal kingdom (1:11).
7. We pursue godliness because Jesus is coming back again in great power, and we know this to be true because of the glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration & because of the prophecy of Scripture (1:16-21).
8. We walk in obedience to Christ because those who wander into sensuality are condemned & will be destroyed (2:3).
9. We are serious about holiness because we believe God knows how to judge the wicked & save the righteous (2:4-10).
10. We turn from ungodliness because those who revel in sin are ugly blots & blemishes, irrational animals, unsteady souls, and accursed children (2:10-16).
11. We pursue holiness because sin never delivers on its promises (2:17).
12. We pursue holiness because those who live in their sin again are like those returning to slavery, returning to the mire, and returning to vomit (2:19-21).
13. We must remember to be holy so we will not be drawn away by those scoffers who will come in the last days following their own sinful desires (3:3).
14. We make every effort to be godly because the world will not always continue as it does now; the heavens & the earth are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment & destruction of the ungodly (3:4-7).
15. We must take Christlikeness seriously right now because we do not know when the Lord will return (3:10).
16. We pursue holiness because all our works will be exposed on the last day (3:10).
17. We pursue holiness because whatever we live for in this life will be burned up & dissolved (3:11).

18. We strive to walk in obedience & repentance because in so doing we may hasten the coming of the day of God (3:12).

19. We live in righteousness now because we are waiting for new heavens & a new earth in which righteousness will dwell forever (3:13).

20. We pursue godliness so that Christ might be glorified both now & to the day of eternity (3:18).<sup>7</sup>

These godly virtues speak into how we live reflective of Jesus daily. Whatever label we use, doctrine, dogma or theology, biblically what we believe about God & humanity, defines how we live & is central to life. We're called to grow into this knowledge, and live it for the glory of God, and the betterment of ourselves & others. Exactly because wrong assumptions lead to wrong conclusions which leads to destructive behavior.

I saw an Instagram post from a 'Christian' acquaintance recently which said... *'Two ideas that will never agree with one another...Made in the image of God, and total depravity.'* If he means those two things can't be true of us at the same time, he's not living out of doctrinal purity. The Bible tells us clearly, we're made in the image of God, but that the fall has brought us to a state of total depravity! Total need of salvation & restoration in Christ. To deny either one of those points, or to say they're mutually exclusive is to undermine a core doctrine of the faith & to lie to people. We're made in the image of God, but sin has separated us from Him. Christianity demands repentance from sin & submission to the Lordship of Christ. As Christians we must be responsible with our words & how we live including what we like & share in social media.

J.C. Ryle explains: "Mark what I say. If you want to *do good* in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply-cut, doctrinal religion (be well versed in a biblical theology of God & mankind). If you believe little, those to who you try to do good will believe nothing. In other words, our primary goal of living virtuously is to glorify & be witnesses for Christ which is what 1 Peter is all about.

The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling people roundly of Christ's vicarious death & sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe on a crucified Savior; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look & live - to believe, repent & be converted.

This is the only teaching God honors at home & abroad. Let clever advocates of a theology deviating from sound biblical doctrine, let them show us any place which has been evangelized without dogma by their principles. They can't, and never will. This is why we want to do EV training in the fall to know what the Gospel is & share it well.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/why-we-must-pursue-holiness/holiness/>

Christianity without distinct doctrine (the unchanging set of beliefs held by the church) is a powerless thing. It may be beautiful to some minds, but it's childless & barren. There's no getting over the facts. The good that's done in the earth may be comparatively small. Evil may abound, and ignorant impatience may murmur & cry out that Christianity has failed. But, depend on it, if we want to do good & shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic weapons, and stick to dogma. No dogma, no fruits! No positive evangelical doctrine, no evangelization!"<sup>8</sup>

Holiness isn't a new topic to Peter. In 1 Peter 1:14-16 he says, "*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup>But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup>for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*" It's a choice we make in the power of the Spirit to walk in the truth God has communicated to us; doesn't happen by osmosis, but by intentional pursuit of God.

"Our translation for holiness comes from the Hebrew word *qadowsh* which means 'to cut.' To be holy means to be cut off, or separate, from everything else. It means to be in a class of your own, distinct from anything that has ever existed or will ever exist. *Qadowsh* also means, to be entirely morally pure, all the time & in every way possible."<sup>9</sup> Privately & corporately.

So...here's your homework...meditate on this passage, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal where you need growth. And, I sent you another short article titled, How Can I Glorify God with different list of 20 things to meditate on in your quiet times this week. Pray God convicts you, and moves you forward in living these virtues pursuing holiness. Begin to grow in grace...be diligent in recognizing false teachers & doctrine while trusting Scripture. Learning to recognize false teaching, becoming able to identify those who teach truth. Living into God's Truth we can grow in grace & Christian virtue & fulfill our calling as Christ's ambassadors in this world.

Remember, you have all you need; doctrinal purity leads to holiness & love, deepening our experience of grace & peace - it is more precious than life!

**Include open prayer time with mic's**

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<sup>8</sup> Holiness, 355-356

<sup>9</sup> Paul Tripp, "The Doctrine of Holiness" [blog], September 10, 2018, <https://paultripp.com/articles/posts/the-doctrine-of-holiness-article>