

Everything We Need: Following Jesus

2 Peter 1:1-11

September 23, 2018

Today, we are continuing our sermon series on Following Jesus. We will learn from one of the most famous Christ-followers in all of history. He was a man who experienced incredible highs and lows in his walk with Christ. Early on in his relationship with Jesus he said: "...Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8) A while later, he took following Jesus to a whole other level by saying, "Lord, if it's you...tell me to come to you on the water." (Mt. 11:28) And at yet another point, he failed miserably as a follower, denying he even knew Jesus, "He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, 'I don't know this man you're talking about.'" (Mk. 14:71)¹ He was later restored to fellowship with Christ and went on to become a strong preacher of the gospel. And, after following Jesus for many, many years, according to reliable sources, the Apostle Peter was martyred by the Roman Emperor Nero around AD 65.² Peter was put to death for one reason and one reason only: He was a follower of Christ. Therefore, as we journey through his letter, 2 Peter, we will learn some key things about Following Jesus from someone who lived it out until his dying breath!

Please turn in your Bible to 2 Peter 3. The key purposes of Peter's 2nd letter are actually found in its final verses. Every Christ-follower is admonished in 2 Peter 3:17-18, "Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, **be on your guard** so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But **grow in the grace and knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." And so, the 1st purpose of this letter is to warn Christ-followers to be on their guard against false teaching. Pastor Eric will talk about this when he preaches on chapter 2 two weeks from now. The 2nd purpose of this letter is to urge Christ-followers to grow in grace and knowledge. As we think about how we can grow in knowledge, let me take this opportunity to urge you to read through the entire letter of 2 Peter some time this week. It's 3 short chapters, but they are packed with lots of great information about Following Jesus.

That word "grow" is something we really need to grab onto this morning. It reminds us that God's grace and knowledge are not static for us. They are intended to be deep treasure troves that we spend our lives exploring and digging into! As much as I love to talk about the word "grace," it's probably more important for us today to consider this word "knowledge." It's so easy for us to forget that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ involves BOTH knowing information about Him BUT ALSO knowing him relationally, as we become better acquainted with Him. The *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* has a very helpful definition for Knowledge: "An intimate, informed relationship resulting from conversion and growth."³ Peter refers to this knowledge of Jesus, several times throughout his letter. It is about knowing Jesus; it's a relational word.

Now, please turn in your Bible to 2 Peter 1. Peter opens his letter in 2 Peter 1:1-2, "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." I LOVE Peter's opening remarks! Peter refers to himself as a "servant," meaning he knew that Jesus was his Lord and Master. He also calls himself an "Apostle," meaning he was as an eyewitness to the living Christ and that he knew he'd been commissioned to play his particular part in the body of Christ. Peter then writes this wonderful phrase, "through the righteousness of Jesus," showing that he understood that it was not about his own righteousness. He, along with all of us other believers, had equally received this precious gift of faith that we all share alike.⁴

¹ It's interesting to ponder Peter's use of the phrase "Grace and peace be yours in abundance..." in verse 2. Peter perhaps understood God's grace and peace better than any other Christ-follower, because he was the one who famously and publicly denied even knowing Jesus. After this major mistake, Peter's knowledge of Jesus continued to grow and increase to the point where it led him to enjoy an abundant life of forgiveness and godliness. And now, as he writes 2 Peter, he wishes for each of us, an abundance of grace and peace!

² *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2549.

³ Note on 2 Peter 1:2 on p. 2552. Grand Rapids, MI, 2015.

⁴ This phrase "faith as precious" is a little misleading. The *NIV* word, translated "precious," is *ισότιμος* which means "generally 'equal in honor/value', also simply equal, like, of the same kind/value." Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 481). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Therefore, "precious is not necessarily about the emotional value." See Thomas R. Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: 1-2 Peter, Jude*, Vol. 37, B&H, Nashville, TN, 2003, p. 285. The *ESV* more clearly translates it "a faith of equal standing with ours."

2 Peter 1:3-4 go on to say, “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 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, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

1) **We have everything we need for following Jesus.** This is so encouraging to read! We are NOT lacking anything. We are fully equipped for that to which we are called. Without question, no worries... but also, and this is significant: there are NO excuses! (Since we have everything we need.) Now, Peter doesn't specifically tell us what this “everything” is. There's no breakdown of what's in our “backpack” of the things we need to follow Jesus. So, what exactly do we need for following Jesus? Simply put: The answer is Jesus. Jesus is everything we need for following Jesus. Peter says this in 2 Peter 1:3, we have “everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him.” This goes back to the definition we talked about earlier: Knowledge: “An intimate, informed relationship resulting from conversion and growth.”

Peter highlights 3 particular things about Jesus in vv. 3-4:

1. Jesus has divine power. 2. Jesus called us. 3. Jesus promises us two things.

1. Jesus has divine power because He Himself is divine. We know this because Jesus is God. We actually just read one of the clearest statements on the deity of Christ in the entire Bible. 2 Peter 1:1 talks about “...the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ...” The grammar here is actually pretty explicit. Jesus is both our God and our Savior. Therefore, as we are following Jesus, if we need anything, we are in an intimate, informed relationship with One who has divine power. That should do the trick! But, that's not all. Peter goes on to say...

2. Jesus called us by His own glory and goodness. Glory is about Jesus' unique excellence, His supremacy. & Goodness is about Jesus' moral perfection. This call on our lives has nothing to do with our own excellence or morality. But when Jesus called each one of us to Himself, it had everything to do with HIS own amazing qualities and character. Peter goes on to say that ...

3. Jesus promises us 2 things.

1) Participation in the divine nature and 2) Escape from the corruption caused by evil desires.

When I first read v. 4, I've got to be honest with you, it freaked me out a little: “Participation in the divine nature!” So, I decided to check the *ESV*, which says, “you may become partakers of the divine nature.” That freaked me out even MORE! This concept does flow well through my theological grid. I am not divine. I am not God. (and all God's people said... “amen!”) How can we, as mere mortals, possibly “participate in” or “partake of” the divine nature? I'm pretty sure we're all participating in our own human natures! As it turns out, the defining nuance that really matters here is that, we are NOT, IN AND OF OURSELVES, divine beings, but rather we are participating in God's divine nature THROUGH Jesus Christ. Verse 1 opens the letter by stating clearly how our precious faith was received only because of HIS righteousness, NOT our own. That said, amazingly you and I can now participate in living out godly lives that display His character qualities. In other words, as we follow Jesus, we are becoming more and more like Jesus, more and more like the divine.⁵ Jesus also promises us escape from the corruption caused by evil desires. These evil desires come from within ourselves, but as we participate in the divine nature, we take on godly qualities like goodness and self-control, which protect us from being corrupted. All of these things that Peter has just explained about Jesus in vv. 1-4, explain why **you and I truly do have EVERYTHING WE NEED for following Jesus!**

This incredible reality propels us into 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, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.” “For this very reason,” because of all we just learned from vv. 1-4⁶, Now add to your faith these awesome qualities! In other words...

2) **Since we have everything we need, let's give it our full effort!** Let's define these 7 words quickly:

⁵ See 1 Peter 1:15-16.

⁶ Because...we know Jesus and have received a precious faith. ...Jesus has given us everything we need. ...Jesus has called us. ...Jesus has given us some very great/precious promises. ...we can participate in the divine nature. ...we've escaped the corruption in this world. Because of all this, for this very reason!

goodness⁷ = “taking part in God’s own moral excellence.”⁸

knowledge⁹ = information about something or acquaintance with someone.

self-control¹⁰ = the ability to resist temptation

perseverance¹¹ = endurance through testing/trials

godliness¹² = devoted and reverent living

mutual affection¹³ = love between bros/sis in Christ

love¹⁴ = affection demonstrated by esteeming others above oneself.¹⁵

It’s natural for us to wonder why these qualities are listed in this particular order and how one, then links to the next. However, this stair-step structure is probably more about the items in the list than about any particular sequence or order to the list.¹⁶ It would be dangerous for us to think of them in some kind of a moralistic or legalistic manner, where one quality is more/less important than another or where we must master one before we can move on to the next.¹⁷ It is better for us to recognize that all of these are important qualities for us to pursue.¹⁸ I urge you not to dismiss this list as busy work or as legalistic rule following. Rather, I urge you to do what God’s Word says here to do: make every effort to add these to your faith. However, it’s vital that we not pursue these qualities through our own strength or goodness, but rather through dependence upon God’s divine power. Col. 1:29 comes to mind, “To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” Godly character will not develop and improve on its own. The Bible calls us to personal action and diligent effort, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

The importance of these qualities is further explained in 2 Peter 1:8-9, “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 whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.” Here we find that...

3) Diligently following Jesus offers us a fulfilling future. In verse 8, Peter lovingly encourages us; he coaches us how to keep from wasting our lives. I mean, sitting on the couch from time to time feels kind of good, but overall, most of us really prefer to have our lives make a difference. Peter urges us that if we increase in each of these qualities, we can live out effective/productive lives.²⁰ In fact, he clarifies for us that it’s not enough, to just make sure we possess these qualities. God’s Word tells us to make sure that we are continually growing in them “in INCREASING measure.”²¹ If we have stopped developing these virtues in our lives, our faith has stalled out. By the way, “stalling out” is what happens right before a plane or helicopter crashes in a massive fireball.²² We DON’T want that to happen with our faith! If we’ve been following Jesus for many years, but our spiritual life is suffering

⁷ ἀρετή = “uncommon character worthy of praise, excellence of character, exceptional civic virtue ... bring the finest character to your commitment.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 130). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁸ There a great comment on the virtue of “goodness” from verse 5, “Such a person is an honorable person indeed, for he or she takes part in God’s own moral excellence.” (Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 179). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.)

⁹ γνῶσις = “comprehension or intellectual grasp of something, knowledge.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 203). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁰ ἐγκράτεια = “restraint of one’s emotions, impulses, or desires, self-control.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 274). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹¹ ὑπομονή = “the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 1039). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹² εὐσεβεία = “awesome respect accorded to God, devoutness, piety, godliness.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 412). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹³ Φιλᾶδελφία = “love of brother/sister.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 1055). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁴ ἀγάπη = “the quality of warm regard for and interest in another, esteem, affection, regard, love (without limitation to very intimate relationships, and very seldom in general Greek of sexual attraction).” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 6). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁵ Read Colossians 3:14.

¹⁶ *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2552.

¹⁷ See the full discussion by Thomas R. Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: 1-2 Peter, Jude*, Vol. 37, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN, 2003, p. 297-298.

¹⁸ The Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 might be another good example of a list where each quality has its own merit.

¹⁹ Cultivating our relationship with God each day by making these efforts, will keep us in close communion with Him and it will also reveal to us areas where we need to give something over to our Lord, when they become a struggle. See also Ephesians 1:19 and 2:10.

²⁰ Consider Ephesians 2:10.

²¹ The NRSV translation is clearer here, “For if these things are yours AND are increasing among you.”

²² The Christian life is not intended to be a stagnant pool, like the Dead Sea which is dead because it has no outlet. We are intended to be continually spiritually fed and filled up so that we can grow and so that the overflow and outpouring of our lives has an impact. NOTE: NOT pouring out of emptiness or exhaustion. Pouring out of fullness and daily participation in God’s divine nature.

from arrested development, we need to begin making every effort to push beyond our childhood or adolescent years of faith, and to become mature adults in our faith.²³

Verse 9 warns that whoever does not have these qualities, is forgetting why they were redeemed in the first place. It uses the phrase, “nearsighted and blind.” One translation says they are “so shortsighted that they cannot see.”²⁴ They seem to be so focused on the present things of this life, that they are failing to see the helpful perspective of what God has done in their past. They are also failing to look forward to what God has plans to do in an incredible future in heaven. Peter refers this in v. 11.²⁵

2 Peter 1:10 then continues, “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble.” Peter introduces a very thought-provoking phrase here, “confirm your calling and election.”²⁶ This sounds a little strange to us, especially to those of us with a more Calvinistic bent. Calling and election are all about God’s sovereign plans.²⁷ Many of us probably feel that “calling and election” have nothing to do with our human choice or effort. In fact, it made more sense to most of us when we read earlier in 2 Peter 1:3 that, “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 and goodness.” You see, God calls us not because of our own merit or anything we have done to earn salvation. It is by His own glory and goodness that any of us are called to faith. And yet, Peter introduces this perplexing phrase in v. 10, “confirm your calling and election.” Bible commentator, Peter H. Davids writes, “This teaching may sit uncomfortably with some people’s theology, but it is the other side of the coin, [A coin that has, on one side, God controlling our calling and election, and that has, on the other side, each believer confirming his/her own calling and election.] And it is our side of the coin, that [Peter wants his readers to hear], for they have among them, some who think that their salvation is firm enough, without their pursuing any of the virtues that our author recommends.”²⁸

Well, rather than open up any further debate between Calvinism vs. Arminianism, let’s focus on what is clear to both sides: All of us should let our Christian faith grow and blossom more and more in godly qualities, BOTH to keep us from stumbling AND to keep up our anticipation of our heavenly reward. Perhaps our best takeaway here, is that Peter is trying to motivate us regarding the urgency of NOT resting on our laurels, not falling into apathy, and not coasting along in our faith.

2 Peter 2:10-11 says, “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” As Peter brings this section to a strong finish, he gives the command “make every effort!”²⁹ Peter is urging us to be especially conscientious, to be zealous and eager, even to take pains to get this done.³⁰ In other words, spend your energy and resources on THIS! Mark your own spiritual development as a “HIGH priority.” “Striving for spiritual maturity is NOT optional for Christians.”³¹ The good news this morning is that we have everything we need for following Jesus. So, we need to press on in our faith and Christian Living! **Whether you’ve been following Jesus for 90 days or 90 years, KEEP GOING & KEEP GROWING!**

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²³ Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 and Hebrews 5:11-14.

²⁴ *The Good News Bible*.

²⁵ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 186). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

²⁶ Consider Jude 24-25.

²⁷ Consider Ephesians 1:3-5, 11.

²⁸ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 188). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. See Matthew 3:8 and Acts 26:20.

²⁹ σπουδαῖον = “to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation, be zealous/eager, take pains, make every effort, be conscientious.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 939). Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

³⁰ Rather than focusing on just NOT doing the wrong things, Peter urges us to focus on DOING the right things. It’s a matter of where we spend our time and energy, resisting the bad or running after the good. We avoid stumbling by DOING the good things that God has called us to. Peter is warning us in v. 10, if you don’t keep doing these things in vv. 5-7 in increasing measure, you’re just setting yourself up to stumble. You are letting yourself take your eye off the ball and you are forgetting what God the very qualities that God is providing through your salvation from sin.

³¹ The *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* summarizes this very well on p. 2553. Grand Rapids, MI, 2015.