

2 Peter 1:5-11

“Blessed Assurance”

There's no doubt about it, the life of the Christian is a myriad of “from” and “into” type of dynamics. Whereby we're taken *from* one thing and placed *into* or turned *toward* another. We're delivered *from* death *into* life, *from* darkness *into* light, *from* wickedness or worldliness *into* righteousness and it all begins when we turn *from* our sin and turn *toward* Christ learning from there what it means to abide *in* Christ. So the Christian experience is never without direction, it never leaves us in a neutral place whereby we're turning *from* one thing but we don't really have any direction *toward* another, there is always definite direction in Christ. Here in 2nd Peter we've already been made aware of the fact that (as believers) by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ we've been delivered *from*, that is we've escaped the *corruption* that is in the world through lust. But it doesn't end with escaping corruption; we're now to move *into* Christian maturity.

Or another way we might state that is that life in Christ doesn't culminate in the “born again” experience. That isn't where it ends, that's where it begins. It's not “Whew...I made it, now I'm safe.” It's true, you made it, you're safe, but you don't stop now, you've just started. It's no different than when you were born physically; life didn't stop, growth and development didn't stop at birth, that's where *started*. From there it was about growing, learning, developing, coming into an understanding of life, figuring out how to walk and talk, grow in strength and excel more and more. The same holds true for life in Christ. If your heart belongs to Christ you've been born again, that's an awesome thing, good for you! But don't stop there, you've been blessed and benefitted from *salvation*, now move on in to *sanctification*... “Sanctification...what's that?” It means “set apart,” let your life be set apart *from* the world and given over *to* the Lord, grow in spiritual maturity, lead a life that's holy, recognize that your life is no longer your own you've been bought with a price (that being the precious blood of Jesus Christ) so surrender your life completely, in totality to Him.

That's your responsibility; it's true that the Christian experience is both a *sudden* and a *series* of *from/into* type dynamics, yet in the midst of all of that there's relationship involved. Which is to say that God does the work, but you don't remain passive in the process but rather you play an integral part in the process. It's what I call Divine initiative and human responsibility.

As it pertains to our relationship with God we need to understand that God always initiates and God always empowers but it's up to us to respond appropriately to His initiative. It's like this; God has initiated a relationship with you, we call that salvation. He will empower you to lead a life that's set apart to Him, we call that sanctification. But you don't have to surrender to Him in that or give Him His way with that. You don't have to draw near *to* God or become a student of the word *of* God, you don't have to spend time in worship, or spend time in prayer *with* God, He won't force you to do those things. He will *enable* you to do those things, but He won't force you to that's your responsibility. In John Ch 15 Jesus said, "You didn't choose Me but I chose you..." That's Divine initiative, yet over and over again He made the statement "Follow Me," that's human responsibility.

So there is the truth of what God has *done*, but now in response to that there's something that we need to *do*. We need to submit to God so that He can do what He wants to do in us and through us. To the Philippians Paul said it like this, "...*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*" Phil 2:12-13 You see, don't resist God's work in your life, cooperate *with* God, submit your life *to* God, that's your part, that's my part.

I say all that to say this; Vs 3-4 of Ch 1 of 2nd Peter = Divine initiative, Vs 5-11 deal with human responsibility. Let's read beginning with Vs 2 so as to follow the flow and keep with the context.

Vs2-4

You see this is Divine initiative, these are things that He's done *for* us irrespective of who we are or what we've done. He's (by His divine power) *given us* all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him (we spoke of that last week). He's *given us* exceedingly great and precious promises through which we have become *partakers* of the divine nature, that is you've become a son or a daughter of God and in Him you've escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. He's done all that of His own initiative. How then are you to respond to that, what's my responsibility in light of that?

Vs5-7

Or to understand all of that another way; simply surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Let the Lord have His way in you and these things will occur as the natural byproduct of abiding in Christ. It's another aspect of the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Now, don't think of these attributes as links on a chain that hook together simultaneously and instantly. It would be more accurate to recognize these characteristics as the overflow of growth and development in Christ. Each one buds forth and springs from the other and the latter confirms the former.

The seed is planted, the root comes forth from the seed confirming the work of the seed, the shoot springs up from the root confirming the root, from the shoot (or trunk) come the branches, from the branches spring forth the leaves and from the leaves come the flowers or the fruit. But each aspect of successive growth depends on the other and each area of growth confirms the prior development of what went before it. (Make sense?) (It's through the exercise of the one that we develop the other)

So we have here the "seed" which in this case is faith and then 7 successive characteristics of Christian growth/development and maturity. But before we get into that I want to focus for just a minute on the words that lead up to these things here in Vs 5.

Peter says, "But also for this very reason" which is to say that since His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, we do well to respond appropriately to that by working hard to cultivate the various virtues that he's about to list that constitute the fruitful growth of faith in our lives. Godly living does not happen *passively* as we sit idly by waiting for God to do His work. But rather it results as we *aggressively*, or as we have it here "give all diligence" to cultivating the new nature (the divine nature) within us. You see this goes back to the fact of being born again not being the end, it's the beginning, now it's time to grow. God has given us what we need (just as a baby is born with what they need) but we have to apply ourselves in both spiritual discipline and *diligence* if we're to grow in grace and be fruitful for the Lord...

Now, real quick I want to consider this word "diligence" because it's a word that comes up quite a bit in Christian vernacular, it's used commonly in the Christian arena. But let's make it clear, what does the word "diligence" mean? It speaks of an *earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything*, there's also a carefulness about this word, it's not a "hog wild" or "reckless abandon" kind of attitude but rather it's a precision effort, a focused work.

So Peter is saying, "Look, God has done all this for you in Christ, (Vs 3-4) now work hard, give an earnest effort in your walk *with* the Lord, your relationship *to* the Lord, don't slack off or seek to coast. Put forth focused effort in leading a godly life." Jesus said it like this, "*Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*" Luke 13:24 Don't take God's grace for granted, stay focused. The divine nature is not a self-propelling machine that will turn out a godly life for the believer irrespective of what the believer does or the attitude he/she takes to the salvation that God has so graciously provided. It takes an intense effort on the behalf of the believer in cooperating with God's plan for their life, it takes *diligence*. That means more than hanging out in a bible study on Sunday morning or maybe a Wednesday evening, it requires your whole life, all your dedication, we're to give "all diligence."

So, “giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...” Few thoughts here; 1st of all let’s consider the word “add,” more literally it speaks of lavishly supplying, it speaks of providing beyond the need and to supply more than generously. Which is to say that your faith should be saturated in these various attributes, there’s shouldn’t be hints of godliness, or brotherly kindness, these characteristics should be dripping from our faith, overly and abundantly supplied to our faith.

Now when he speaks of adding to our *faith*, understand that faith is the essential element that we start out with. This isn’t a reference to the spiritual gift of faith, that faith that could move mountains that 1st Corinthians Ch’s 12-13 talks about. This is a reference to the simple saving faith through which we begin our life in Christ. That conduit of faith through which the divine nature was given to you, through which you received the forgiveness of sins and received the righteousness of Christ on your behalf; that’s where it all begins, if you don’t know Jesus, you’ve never given your heart *to* Jesus none of the rest of these things from this point forward will really mean a thing to you. You need to come to that place whereby you recognize the fact that you have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (the perfect holiness/righteousness of God). But God has made provision for you to be forgiven of your sin and set right in His sight, and it’s through believing on Jesus Christ and recognizing His sacrifice upon the cross, the shedding of His blood and laying down of His life as sufficient for you. Jesus was delivered up to the cross because of your and my transgression (our sin and rebellion against God), He was raised from the dead 3 days later for our justification (that we might be justified before God). Now that justification is applied to you when you believe in Him (that is trust Him) for that work, once you’ve done that you’ve exercised saving *faith* in Christ, you’ve been born again. Everything in Vs 2-4 has been given *to* you, now this is what God wants *from* you, that you grow and mature in Christ. Don’t stop at saving faith, let the Lord lavish these things upon it, stay submitted, surrendered to Him, lets add *virtue* to your faith.

What’s “virtue?” It’s been described as “moral excellence.” Courage to stand up and do the right thing; if you’ve come *to* Christ as a thief, *in* Christ you quit stealing. If you’re a liar when you come *to* Christ, as you grow *in* Christ be honest, if you’re one to dress provocative prior *to* Christ, when you’re *in* Christ exercise discretion. Those things should be part and parcel with the new life we have in Christ.

There’s another perspective concerning the word “virtue” here and we need to be made aware of it. It can also be used to denote *a manifestation of power that’s characterized by excellence, a wonderful deed*. “What’s that?” Yeah, listen; this is saying that faith is not passive, but that it’s active, this word speaks of energy, vigorous activity. Peter is saying that we should see to it that our faith is an *active* faith, that once we’ve been saved our faith is put to the appropriate use. “Waiting” on the Lord isn’t a synonym for lethargic complacency.

When you're at a restaurant you have a waiter or a waitress, if he/she stood by in lethargic inactivity you wouldn't really consider them to be *waiting* on you would you? So to in our waiting on the Lord; as we wait on Him in faith we're knocking on doors, exploring various avenues, seeking godly counsel and direction. The person who sits back and does nothing is the one whom the Lord described as taking that which had been entrusted to him and burying it in the dirt only to find himself rebuked and dealt with harshly in the end, faith is an active attribute, not passive.

"To virtue knowledge," which is to say that the energy that you expend needs to be tempered with knowledge, knowledge comes 1 of 2 ways. Either by trial and error (which if you're actively serving the Lord, you learn a lot that way) or by studying so as to equip yourself accordingly. The idea here is that we need discernment regarding the things we're going to be active about or actively pursuing. We need to know the direction of God's word and exercise wisdom in the decisions that we're making. Peter was at one point a very impulsive man. There's Jesus walking on water, Peter sees Him, "Lord if that's You call me out to You." Jesus says, "Come on," Peter jumps out all is going well, suddenly he realizes what he's doing, freaks out and starts going down. He was zealous but didn't act according to knowledge. The knowledge of what, that men aren't supposed to walk on water? No, the knowledge that when I'm moving in faith in the midst of life's storms I've got to keep my eyes on Jesus or I'll sink. So let faith be supplied with moral excellence and let it be stirring you into activity and be growing in understanding and discernment (you see)...through both practical experience and the study of the word personally.

"To knowledge self-control," don't act hastily or sporadically. The bible says, "*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*" Prov 16:32 Again, "*Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls.*" Prov 25:28 (No real restraint, easily attacked); this word "self-control" speaks literally of sexual passions, that you not be ruled by the flesh but that God has given you the power to control yourself. However the application can certainly swing much broader into virtually every arena of life. As a general rule I've discovered that when most people are ready to throw in the towel on their walk with the Lord it's because they haven't been exercising self control in some area. They've fallen into sin or somehow compromised and suddenly Christianity is too hard, it's too much for them and they're out...we've got to submit to the Spirit of God and exercise self-control.

“To self control *perseverance*” the word is *endurance*, it speaks of bearing up under trials and tribulations. There are no short cuts to Christ-like character, you see Christ-like character in someone and you think, “Man, I want to be like that” but that didn’t happen for them as the result of some magical pixie dust being sprinkled over their life making some sort of instant change in them. It’s generally the result of years of patient endurance through difficulties, growing in knowledge, being disciplined in self control, all of these things that we’re reading of here. You’re looking at someone who hasn’t grown weary in doing well, they haven’t lost heart in tough times, they’ve maintained the proper perspective and have sought to keep their lives in check as by the Spirit of God and the word of God. To the Corinthians Paul said it like this, “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate (that’s our word self control) in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*” 1 Cor 9:24-27 He doesn’t throw in the towel when times or temptations get tough, he perseveres and presses on.

“To perseverance *godliness*,” which means exactly what it sounds like, “God-likeness” it’s what develops in us through patient endurance, which stems from self control that’s rooted in knowledge/understanding and discernment through the word of God which comes through an active faith.

“To godliness *brotherly kindness*” have you ever noted how some believers can be so incredibly ugly and unkind (and seemingly uncaring) toward another brother or sister in the faith? It’s because they’re lacking in true godliness. It’s an indication that there’s a lack of growth there in the faith. Brotherly kindness isn’t something that pops out of person the moment they’re saved, it’s something that is the result of growth and development, maturity and godliness. Because even though we’re all brothers and sisters in the Lord we can still rub each other wrong occasionally, we’re still contending with the sin nature in the family. We need to grow in godliness so as to exercise brotherly kindness.

“and to brotherly kindness *love*” this is the word “Agape” the all giving, self sacrificing, other’s oriented love of God. It’s the capstone of faith, it’s the necessary attribute that qualifies all the rest, because anything that we do in the name of God apart from love becomes a sounding brass or a clanging symbol, it means nothing... This is the attribute that looks to minister not only to the saint, but to the sinner, it’s the attribute through which God gave His only Son, and Christ laid down His life so that others might come to know Him, be forgiven *by* Him and spend eternity *with* Him.

Vs8

That word knowledge is that word we referenced last week, an exact and accurate in fact intimate knowledge of the Lord; not academically but personally. Not knowing *about* Him, but knowing *Him*.

Pay attention to the words here, “If these things are yours *and abound*,” that is, as they’re held in an increasing measure, you’re growing in them, “you will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”

Now you’re free to correct me if I’m wrong here but it seems to me that “barren” and “unfruitful” are two words that characterize the lives of many Christians today... According to this the reason that they’re ineffective and unproductive is because they’re lacking in their knowledge of God. They’re still infants in Christ, they’re not giving all diligence and/or disciplining themselves to grow in God’s grace.

I think the word “abound” here is important, literally it means “super-abound,” some seem to be satisfied with an occasional glimpse of godliness, Peter says these things should be *abounding*, ever *increasing* in us. Look at Vs 9

Vs9

“Say again?” The one who is barren and unfruitful, the one who doesn’t pursue these qualities but in fact is lacking *in* these qualities is *shortsighted*. “What’s that mean?” It means that they’re nearsighted; they’re not viewing life through the eternal perspective or the lens of God’s redemptive work in their life. They live for the moment, they don’t consider the cost or the long term ramifications of their actions.

Notice, “Even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” This person isn’t responding appropriately to that which God has done *for* him and the new nature that God has given *to* him. He’s like a person who’s forgotten where he’s going and why he’s headed there in the first place, and for that matter what he’s even doing on that road... Evidently he/she forgot their “pre-Christ” condition and how desperately they needed healing and wholeness of soul, and they forgiveness of sins. Maybe they forgot the cost involved that they might be purged of that sin... This is a guy or a gal that though they may be carrying around with them their *justification*, they’re not availing themselves to the work of *sanctification*.

You see, unfortunately this progression isn't a one way street. You can travel the other way down it as well. Perhaps you know someone who was godly at one time but perhaps they ceased enduring, cast off self control and no longer walk according to understanding. Make sure you're headed the right way, move forward, don't rely on where you were at back in '98 or back in '08 for that matter, where are you at with the Lord today, right here and right now? Notice

Vs10-11

He says that in light of what's at stake it's even more important, be *more* diligent to make your call and election sure...don't rely on the past, what's going on in the present? How do I make my calling sure, what's the badge of God's election in my life? He tells us right here in Vs 10, "if you do *these things*" what things? Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control...so on and so forth. As you see these things in your life and you're growing in them, you can know that you're becoming more and more like Jesus, you're being conformed into His image. These things should be evident in anyone who's born again, if you're called, it will show in the way that you live.

"If you do these things you'll never stumble," he didn't say you'll never *sin*, but you'll never fall, that is you'll not fall away. Because you'll be moving forward in Christ, not backward, you see it's not the *profession of* faith that provides *blessed assurance*, it's the *progression in* faith that gives us assurance. The person who claims to be a child of God yet their character and their conduct give no evidence of spiritual growth is only deceiving themselves.

Make your calling and election sure...it's not something you want to be in doubt about, cinch it up, humble yourself before God and ask Christ into your heart. Ask Him to teach you what it means to set yourself aside and grow, being fruitful in the faith. Don't rest until you know for certain that you have your everlasting portion accredited to you in Christ.

Vs11

Don't be one of those people who say, "Man if I can just get in that's all I want" and in so saying think that you're showing some form of humility. What that really says is, "whatever the minimal is that's required of me just show me that." I don't want a meager entrance into the kingdom, man I want an *abundant* entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ I want all that God has for me, don't you? Then let's not just *say* so, let's *show* so being disciplined and diligent, *abounding* in the attributes of fruitful faith...

Prayer Points:

Father we want to be fruitful and effective in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ We want to *abound* in the fruitful attributes of faith. Help us not to be content with an occasional glimmer of godliness but may we dedicate our lives to growing in Your grace becoming more like Jesus. Help us to get our eyes off ourselves, and remember Christ's cleansing work on our behalf, what it cost You and what it means for us...

Lord be there anyone here who may be lacking that assurance having faltered in one or more of these areas may there be a fresh start today, a renewal, a revival to the glory of Your name.

Maybe for you it's not about getting *back* on track, it's about getting on track period. You're at the place of Divine initiative, God is calling out to you, wanting to make Himself real to you and do a cleansing work in you through the blood of Jesus Christ Will you respond to Him today? It's up to you, you can receive Him, or you can reject Him, He wants to give you new life, a new beginning, a fresh start and the forgiveness of sins...receive Him today.