

We continue today in our study in 2nd Peter after a week off for our Episcopal visit. Peter has introduced himself as bondservant or a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was obligated to serve him, because as an Apostle, the Lord Jesus himself had chosen and commissioned Peter – and it is with that authority that he writes this 2nd letter to the pilgrims of the dispersion – that is, those who had to flee their homes because of their faith in Christ.

He is writing to them to warn them about false teachers, the consequences of their false teaching and the proper ways that a Christian should respond and react in the world that God has placed them in.

After pronouncing a blessing on them in verse 2, he then tells his readers – which includes us – that God has given us all things for life and godliness. That means that God has given us all that we need to live our lives in the world that He has created and how to get to the world to come in heaven. Peter has told us in his first letter that we have an inheritance reserved in heaven for us. It is guaranteed for those who know Christ as Savior and Lord.

And, he goes on, because God has called us to Himself by faith, we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises – such as the forgiveness of sins, the privilege of prayer, the privilege of true Worship of Almighty God through the Lord Jesus Christ, the fact that He will never leave us nor forsake us AND, as Peter goes on verse 4, we become partakers of the divine nature, meaning that we have the Holy Spirit and that we are the sons of God.

It is because of all that God has done for us and all that He has given us that Peter then goes on to list some of the responsibilities that we have as Christians. Please turn with me to 2 Peter 1:5-11 (READ).

We note a couple of things before we begin to look that individual characteristics. First, what we do NOT have here is a sequence of Christian characteristics – that is, once you get one, then you strive for the next one and so on. No, these should all be there in some degree in the life every Christian.

Second, we note that this list, as do others that exist, begin with faith. This has to be the starting point. And the ending point is love – as the Apostle Paul said, “*and the greatest of these is love.*”

So, we see that we are to be diligent in adding these things to our lives and to the faith that we already have, we are to add virtue. Before we see what virtue is, again note clearly that it all begins with faith – faith in God ... trust in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This is the beginning of our Christian lives when we believe that Jesus died for our sins in our place on the cross of Calvary.

It is because of what Christ has done for us that we are to then live our lives in a certain way – that is, certain characteristics and qualities must be part of our lives. The first of these is “virtue”. This word means that our behavior should have the highest moral standards. Later on in the letter he discusses the issue of sexual immorality among the false teachers. People used to talk about virtuous living – not so much any more in our society – but for the Christian, it is still the norm.

Following virtue we are to add to that knowledge – in other words we are to continually seek to grow in our knowledge of our faith – that is, we should learn more about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and what it

means to live a life pleasing to God. This is the type of knowledge that we are have in increasing measure.

And this knowledge can only come through our study of the Word of God – both corporate, that is, what we do here in our church and our personal study at home. This is why God has given us His Word so that we will grow in our knowledge of Him and what He requires of us in our Christian lives. It is another of the blessings that we have as Christians.

To knowledge we are to add self-control. The original King James translates this word “temperance” – which today means only to abstain from alcoholic beverages. But, back then it had the implication of controlling all of our carnal desires – in other words, we should control ourselves. Again, in today’s society this seems to be something that is passe – but also again, God has not changed and neither has His requirements for us as His children.

After self-control we add perseverance or patience. As you might know, this is one of the characteristics of true, Biblical love from 1 Corinthians 13 – “*love is patient...*” In the context – and remember he is writing to those who had to flee their homes, it means to bear and endure whatever trials come their way – and they had to face many. We have to face our own trials, and we have to have this same kind of patience.

To perseverance we are to add godliness. This does not mean that become little gods. No, what it does mean is that become more Christlike in our character – in our actions and reactions. When difficult situations arise – how do we act? How do we react? God has told us in His Word. Will we be perfect – absolutely not, but this is another reason why Jesus died for our sins – because we couldn’t do it ourselves.

And then we are to add in increasing measure, brotherly kindness. The word here should be a familiar one – it is *phildelphia* – which means brotherly love and it is what the city is known as – The City of Brotherly Love. Here, in the context of Peter’s letter, it means the type of love that one Christian is to have for another.

As Christians we all have one very important thing in common – we have all been saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. Any differences that we might have with one another should pale in comparison to this foundational truth that we all have in common.

As Jesus said in John 13:34-35: “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*”

And we read in 1 John 4:7-8 & 21: “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love... And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*”

This does not mean that we agree all the time with our brothers and sisters in Christ – but we are to love them as Christ love us and gave himself for us and our salvation.

All these things are to be evident in lives – and they are to be there in increasing measure. The result, if we have these things is seen as we continue in our passage – 2 Peter 1:8: “*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

In other words, if we have these characteristics in our lives, giving all diligence, as the word says, – that is, making an effort to add to them, then we will be effective Christians in a world that needs the witness of practicing Christians. Let's be honest – if Christians don't act and react like Christians should, then we are no different from the rest of the world.

And that is why Peter then adds a negative to what he has said: 2 Peter 1:9: *“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”* Remember, because of our faith in Christ, we have been cleansed from our sins. And while we cannot add to our salvation, living as God wants us to live is an evidence of our salvation. Let us never forget that important, foundational truth!

And so he then he issues a challenge to us – 2 Peter 1:10-11: *“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

God has, by His grace, called us to Himself and given us faith to trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. And as we strive to live according to His Word, it will prove to ourselves that we belong to Him ... that we have been chosen by God Himself – and, most importantly, when this earthly life is over, we have an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We know that as heaven with all its glories. And my friends, it doesn't get any better than that!