

Equipped with Hope

Bible Background • 2 Peter 1

Printed Text • 2 Peter 1:4-14 | Devotional Reading • Psalm 130

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE biblical ways to lead a more fruitful life; FEEL empowered to live effective and fruitful lives; and DEVELOP a deeper knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Focus

"I just don't understand you," Isaac complained to his wife. "I told you that I would take care of the utility bill later this week!"

They were arguing, something that seemed to occur more and more frequently these days. It seemed to Isaac that Audrey nitpicked about everything. Some of the bills were behind, but he had assured her that he would make sure they got paid. Why couldn't she just leave it alone? The bills had been delinquent before, but hadn't he always paid them?

Audrey constantly nagged him about their poor credit rating. Although she hadn't come right out and said it, Isaac felt certain that Audrey blamed him for their inability to buy a new car or move out of the apartment and into a house after eight years. Why didn't she understand that he hadn't had the time to sit down and make a plan to achieve this? Her constant reminders that a bill collector had called or another late notice had come in the mail only seemed to make things worse.

In today's lesson, we will see that faith is not equivalent to blind optimism. To live godly lives, we must not succumb to laziness; instead, we must take full advantage of the godly resources available to each of us as believers.

Keep in Mind

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Focal Verses

^{KJV} 2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. 13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; 14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

^{NLT} 2 Peter 1:4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. 5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. 8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. 10 So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. 11 Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. 13 And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. 14 For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life,

The People, Places, and Times

Persecution of the Christians. After the death of Jesus, His disciples became objects of hatred and persecution. Jesus' prediction that men would "kill and crucify" His disciples came to fruition (Matthew 23:34). Also after Pentecost, many believers were threatened, arrested, beaten, and killed (Acts 4:1-3, 21; 5:17-18). The mob's murder of Stephen and the subsequent wave of violent activity toward Christians caused most believers to flee from Jerusalem. While this persecution led to the scattering of the Jerusalem congregation (8:1), this scattering resulted in the rapid expansion of the church within other nations.

One of the primary persecutors of the Christians was a young man named "Saul of Tarsus." Prior to surrendering his life to Christ, Saul "made havoc" on the church, causing men and women to be thrown in prison (8:3, NKJV). Following his conversion on the Damascus Road, Saul, whose name was later changed to "Paul," became a target of persecution himself (13:50; 2 Corinthians 6:3-5; 11:23-25; Galatians 5:11).

There were other victims of 1st-century Christian persecution, including the apostle James, the brother of John. James was put to death on the orders of Herod Agrippa I. The Roman emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68) is most noted for his virulent persecution of the Christians. Historians record that Nero falsely blamed Christians for setting a great fire, which destroyed a quarter of Rome. This event marked a wave of political rather than religious persecutions. It is widely believed that it was Nero who ordered that Paul be put to death.

By the time Peter wrote this second epistle, Paul, his co-laborer in Christ, had probably been martyred, and the church was undergoing fierce persecution. Peter understood that these persecuted believers, to whom he was writing, longed for both knowledge and peace, so he mentions it in his opening salutation to them. He knows also that it is only through their intimate relationship with and personal knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ that they might experience the grace and peace they sought.

Background

Apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter with a twofold purpose: not only to warn Christians about the many false teachers who were vying to take them off the foundational truths of the faith but also to exhort them to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ—to grow in their faith. At this time, Peter knew he did not have long to live and therefore, shared his heart with the saints. He wanted them to be warned about what would happen when he was no longer with them and also to remind them that the truth of God's Word is unchanging. As an overseer of the church, called by God, apostle Peter took his responsibilities very seriously.

At-A-Glance

1. Promises to Empower (2 Peter 1:4)
2. Spiritual Growth (vv. 5-9)
3. Confidence in Our Calling (vv. 10-11)
4. Remember (vv. 12-14)

In Depth

1. Promises to Empower (2 Peter 1:4)

The Bible is saturated with promises of God. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there are constant affirmations of the promises made and kept by God. At the dedication of the temple, King Solomon reminded the people that the period of political peace they were enjoying was a result of God keeping His promises. Solomon declared, "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised" (1 Kings 8:56).

When Peter speaks of promises in this chapter, he uses the Greek word *epaggelma*, which means a promise made voluntarily, rather than the result of a request. Here we see the connection between God's promises and God's grace.

God's promises are a result of His grace and lovingkindness, not because we deserve the blessing. Peter explains that the "exceeding great and precious promises" made to His people are a direct result of the natural goodness of God (2 Peter 1:4). Just as it is natural for us to breathe, it is natural for God to bless those He loves. God also desires that His greatest creation be "partakers" or participants in His divine nature and separate from the corrupting forces of the flesh. There is no doubt that Peter's three-year walk with Jesus had made him a personal witness to some of these promises. Peter had learned to appreciate the faithfulness of God through His Word and through personal experience. Present-day Christians can be routinely assured of the promises of God through regular and prayerful study of His Word.

2. Spiritual Growth (vv. 5-9)

Our union in Christ and our participation in His divinity provide us with the resources we need to live godly lives. This is not to say that we become gods; instead, we are confident we have the living God within us. Peter is careful to note that as Christians, we must give “all diligence” or do our part, too (v. 5). We cannot be slack or complacent about our faith walk. We must persevere and make every effort to perfect our relationship with God. Our spiritual development is an ongoing process, during which there is constant growth, shaping, and refining.

The idea of planting flower seeds in a garden and then failing to tend to them is ludicrous! Left unattended, the seeds will dry up and die; or the seeds will sprout, but the tiny plants will be overtaken by weeds and strangled. Equally ludicrous is the idea that our faith, left unattended, will grow. Like the neglected flower seeds, the old habits of our former sinful nature will rise and quickly take hold of our lives.

Our faith is like the seed. Faith is what brings us to Christ in the first place. Now that we have become part of Him, we want our faith to blossom and grow so that we can reflect the very character traits of Jesus. Just as plant seeds need watering, our faith needs nurturing in the Christlike characteristics that Peter lists in verses 5-7: “virtue” (goodness), “knowledge” (understanding), “temperance” (self-control), “patience” (endurance), “godliness” (goodness), “brotherly kindness” (love toward humankind), and “charity” (godly love).

Peter’s emphasis on knowledge is especially important because a great portion of this epistle addresses the false teaching that was undermining the church during this period. Peter understood that the only protection the believers had against the false doctrines cropping up was “knowledge,” or a firm grasp of the truths of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus (vv. 3, 5-6). As we grow spiritually, so too should our knowledge of spiritual truths. The more we know about Jesus, the harder we will strive to understand how to become more like Him. Not only is knowledge critical to Christian maturity and to the development of a godly lifestyle, it is, as Paul claims, our “sword of the Spirit,” an integral weapon in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:17).

Equally important is Peter’s emphasis on “love” or “charity” (2 Peter 1:7). The Greek word used here is *agape* or godly love. This is the highest form of love and the one expressed by God Himself when He “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Love is essential to the growth, maintenance, and work of the Christian community.

3. Confidence in Our Calling (vv. 10-11) Peter now directs his attention to exhorting believers to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). Peter is urging the believers to have confidence in their salvation. This confidence is based on living to exhibit Christlike characteristics. It should not be surprising that Christians who are not growing in faith will typically lack confidence in their choice of beliefs. It is not enough that we confess Christ. We must grow in Christ in order to gain assurance of our salvation.

Peter’s reference to “an entrance . . . ministered unto you abundantly” (v. 11) may be a description of the triumphal heavenly welcome that awaits believers who hold the course. Similarly, his reference to the “everlasting kingdom” reminds us that confidence in our calling encourages us to “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Christians who lack confidence in their calling cannot enjoy the promise of the “prize” of a glorious and eternal life in the presence of God.

4. Remember (vv. 12-14)

Peter now turns his attention from teaching and focuses on himself. All that he has said he also has learned for himself. It is not enough that believers learn; we must be willing to share, as Peter does. Peter stresses that he “will not be negligent” in presenting these learned truths to other believers (2 Peter 1:12). The apostle is probably about 60 years old when he writes this epistle. He may be recalling the painful time in his life when he was negligent in speaking on behalf of Christ and denied even knowing Jesus. But Peter is not the spiritually immature apostle we first encountered in the Gospels. His priorities have shifted from self to Christ. In this epistle, it is a spiritually mature man who now emphasizes his solemn duty to witness and who seeks to “stir . . . up” the believers (v. 13).

It is clear that Peter is thinking his death may be imminent when he writes, “shortly I must put off this my tabernacle” (v. 14). Some scholars believe Peter may have been imprisoned during the time this letter was written. Although he speaks of his death, he is more concerned that the believers be put “in remembrance” or be reminded of what he has taught them, after he is dead (v. 15). Because we know that the young disciple, John Mark, was with Peter (see 1 Peter 5:13), we may assume that Peter taught him and intended to have John Mark record these teachings. Mark’s record is what we now know as the third Gospel or the Gospel of Mark. This particular theory is likely considering Mark’s Gospel includes facts about Peter that are not mentioned in any of the other Gospels.

Search the Scriptures

Fill in the blanks.

1. "According as his _____ hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).
2. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and _____: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (v. 4).

Discuss the Meaning

1. Discuss some of the promises God has made to us that can help us win the spiritual battle against the corruption of the world.
2. Discuss the evidence that points to Christian ineffectiveness and fruitlessness. What are some of the causes? What solutions can you suggest?

Lesson in Our Society

Our spiritual growth in Christ is a constant work in progress. While God perfects us, it is His desire that we work with Him in developing spiritually. God has provided us with everything that we need, and we should use what He has given us to bring glory to Him as well help one another. We can only escape the corruption of this world and resist yielding to the flesh and falling back into our old sinful patterns by applying our spiritual power daily. As we go about our routines—conducting business, carrying out parental obligations, enjoying free time, even just running errands—remembrance is critical.

Make It Happen

Reread 2 Peter 1:1-7. Identify which of these godly characteristics are active in your life and which traits you need "to make every effort to add to your faith" (v. 5, NIV).

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

2 Peter 1:4-14

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The purpose of God's promises is to enable us to become "partakers of the divine nature." God is at work in us to transform us so we can truly live like those who bear the divine image. God has given us His Word, which enables us to develop new life and godliness. Our Father has made great promises that lead us to a great life. Because He is a great God, He can and will keep all His promises. There are promises for eternal life, forgiveness, healing, joy, peace, and prosperity. God's greatest promise, however, was the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, in turn, promised that God would give the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:26).

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; **6** And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; **7** And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Because we are now partakers of God's divine character, we must mature spiritually. To do this, we must add to our faith. The Greek word *epichoregeo* (**ep-ee-khor-ayg-EH-o**) is translated as "add" and means, "to supply generously." We develop one quality as we exercise another. These qualities grow out of our spiritual, vital relationship with Christ.

In these verses, Peter lists seven qualities of a godly life: "virtue" (Gk. *arete*, **ar-ET-ay**), which means "holy courage, strength"; "knowledge" (Gk. *gnosis*, **GNO-sis**), which means "to have discernment or to perceive"; "temperance" (Gk. *egkrateia*, **eng-KRAT-i-ah**), which means "self-control"; "patience" (Gk. *hupomone*, **hoop-om-on-AY**), which means "steadfastness, endurance," or "perseverance"; "godliness" (Gk. *eusebeia*, **yoo-SEB-i-ah**), which means "reverence" or "piety"; "brotherly kindness" (Gk. *philadelphia*, **fil-a-del-FEE-ah**), which means "love of people"; and "charity" (Gk. *agape*, **ag-AH-pay**), which means "godly love."

It is impossible for human nature to manufacture these qualities of Christian character on its own; the Spirit of God must produce them. Because Christians have a transformed nature, we can grow spiritually and develop these qualities. God wants us to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29).

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The results of adding the seven qualities mentioned earlier are that they strengthen, encourage, and improve our lives and the lives of those around us. Where these qualities are present, there will be an abundance of good works (2 Corinthians 9:8). To “abound” in good works means that we do not just sit idly. If these qualities are to exist within us, we must learn to cultivate them so that they produce fruitful results in our lives.

There is much work to do in God’s kingdom. The more we become like Jesus Christ, the more the Holy Spirit can use us in witness and service. The believer who is not growing is idle—“barren (and) unfruitful” (2 Peter 1:8). As Christians, we are commanded to exhort, edify, and comfort one another, continuously building each other up in God’s holy faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13).

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

In 2 Peter 1:9, the phrase “cannot see afar off” denotes that a can only see those things up close. Spiritually, believers who are near-sighted can only see things they can touch. They have no vision for the future, can only see today, and are without hope for tomorrow. In addition, we often forget that Jesus died to cleanse us of our sins. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we have been purged and forgiven. When we forget what God has done for us, when our viewpoint lacks expansive knowledge of Jesus Christ, we will not be excited to witness to others about Him.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

Peter admonishes us to be diligent or to “make every effort” (NIV). While it is true that God must work in us before we can do His will (Philippians 2:12-23), it is also true that we must be willing to work for God and that we must cooperate with Him. Instead of following those who are spiritually blind and suffering from forgetfulness, with diligence we are to take our invitation from God and accept the benefits of salvation. Being diligent also means being obedient. Living diligently and obediently deepens our awareness of the divine power within us, which gives us all things needed for life and makes our “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).

If we, as believers, can apply the Word of God and live according to the will of God, then we will not lose faith. We must walk in righteousness and in good works; consequently, we will not fall back into sin. Because we are growing, we can look forward to an abundant life here and an entrance into heaven.

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

When we live as God wants us to, He promises us an abundant life and entrance into His kingdom. We will have riches of knowledge and holiness beyond our thoughts. Entrance into the kingdom is a gift from God through Christ Jesus, but it corresponds with diligence. We are not saved because of our works, but because we are saved, our lives should display works of obedience and diligence.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Pastors, ministers, and teachers are to teach God’s precepts. Here Peter was saying that it was his responsibility to always remind the people of God’s goodness toward them. He realized that although they knew the precepts of God, a tendency to forget may cause them to take things for granted. By reminding them of God’s divine grace, mercy, and goodness, Peter was reminding them to never forget the basis for their faith.

The Christian who consistently reads the Bible and knows what he or she believes and why will rarely be seduced by false teachers and phony doctrines. As we become established in the truth, we will not be shaken or moved by the problems we encounter in this world. We can stand on the truth—the Word of God!

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; 14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

Peter realized that his death was at hand. God had revealed to Peter the kind of death he would face (see John 21:18-19). In the time he had left, Peter realized that he must stimulate the knowledge of the people of God. Three times in this chapter, he asked them to always remember the things he taught them (2 Peter 1:12-13, 15). Peter indeed left behind something that would never die—the written Word of God. The epistles of 1 and 2 Peter have been ministering to the saints for centuries. People die, but the Word of God lives on!

Sources:

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Say It Correctly

Temperance. TEM-puh-rents.

Diligence. DIH-luh-jents.

Tabernacle. TA-buhr-na-kul.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY	Full of Goodness and Knowledge	(<u>Romans 15:14-21</u>)
TUESDAY	The Beginning of Knowledge	(<u>Proverbs 1:2-7</u>)
WEDNESDAY	An Example in Self-Control	(<u>Titus 1:5-9</u>)
THURSDAY	Enduring to the End	(<u>Matthew 24:9-14</u>)
FRIDAY	A Life of Godliness and Dignity	(<u>1 Timothy 2:1-7</u>)
SATURDAY	Love for One Another	(<u>1 Peter 3:8-12</u>)
SUNDAY	Standing on God's Precious Promises	(<u>2 Peter 1:4-14</u>)