



“Life, Godliness & Christian Growth” (II Peter 1:1-15)

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Read II Peter 1:1-15. Peter wants to make sure that these things he has taught them will be with them when he is long gone. So, even though they have heard them before, he says them again. And the implication is that he repeated them many times.

This was written (and inspired by the Holy Spirit) long before psychology ever came to be. And long before modern day counseling ministries. And before N/A and AA, and Calvary House, and The Most Excellent Way, etc. What we need for life and godliness **has already been given** to us.

THE BENEFITS OF LIFE AND GODLINESS

- It will keep us from being ineffective and unproductive.
- Guard us against nearsightedness/blindness.
 - Nearsightedness is simply not having an eternal mindset. And because they do not have an eternal mindset, they are spiritually blind. They have lost sight of their initial salvation experience, and are living a selfish, shortsighted lifestyle.
- Make our calling and election sure.
 - II Cor.13:5 Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless of course you fail the test.
 - I Cor.15:1-2
- Assurance of a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ.
 - When it comes time for them to stand face to face with Jesus at the gates of glory, it will not be very glorious for them. If they are saved at all, they will be ashamed at his appearing. I've heard some people with the kind of attitude that says, "I'll just be glad to be there." But that kind of attitude is at the very least suspicious of a lack of sincerity and genuineness. Can a truly born again believer really have an attitude like that?
- Will keep you from falling.
 - People who are not growing are very vulnerable to failure.

Let's not forget that the man God uses to pen these words knows failure firsthand. One writer pictured Peter this way: "When I think of Peter, I imagine a broad-shouldered, loud, extroverted, assertive man who is always sweating...he was a headstrong, unbridled hulk who was always getting into trouble and causing his Master plenty of the same."

When Jesus began to communicate clearly to his disciples that he was indeed headed for suffering and death, Peter pulled him aside and began to rebuke him (Matthew 16:21-23). On the Mt. of Transfiguration, Peter was talking when he should have been listening (Matthew 17:4-5; note Mark 9:6). In the Garden on the night of Jesus' arrest, Peter, James and John were sleeping when they should have been praying. The pinnacle of Peter's failures came after a proud assertion at the last Passover meal before the cross. In response to Jesus saying that all of the apostles would fall away that very night, Peter declared that even if all the others failed in this way, he never would. See Matthew 26:31-35, noting Mark 14:29-31 and Luke 22:24, 31-34. Peter did fall, and he fell hard. And he fell three times. And he cursed in the process. Three times before the cock crowed, Peter denied that he had any relationship with Jesus Christ whatsoever.

John 1:42 records Peter's first encounter with Jesus (read text). It is interesting that Peter opens this second letter with "Simon Peter." His first letter opens with "Peter, and apostle of Jesus Christ." This second letter is written when Peter is an aged saint, near the end of his earthly life. And in this letter he includes both of his names. It's as if he wants us to know that we are hearing from the whole man. We are hearing from Simon, a man born like all of us, with a corrupt sin nature. And we are hearing from Peter, the rock he became as a result of the gracious influence of Jesus Christ upon his life.

May we too become a rock for Jesus like Peter.

So where do we begin? Note v.3. This is our first key – knowledge, and specifically, the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Note: Peter closes the book the way he opened it, encouraging growth in the **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). The word is epignosis = recognition; acknowledgment. This is where all of us have to start, by recognizing and acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is a personal recognition and a personal acknowledgment. It involves entering into a personal relationship with Christ at salvation.

The second key is found in v.4 (read). Through his great and precious promises, we have the privilege of participating in the divine nature and escaping the corruption in the world. What great and precious promises is Peter referring to?

* I John 2:25 says "And this is what he promised us— eternal life."

* John 14:1-6; Col.3:1-4

* Phil.3:18-19

Those of us who have a heavenly mindset because this world is no longer our home also embrace the cross. It is through the cross that my salvation is secured and my escape from the corruption in the world is made possible. But it is also through the cross that my freedom from the corruption in the world is maintained. There is one particular promise Jesus made that relates directly to this truth, but before we look at it, let's make sure we understand something

very important. The corruption in the world is caused by “evil desires.” See Isa.53:6; James 1:13-14. My Old Testament devotional reading Saturday morning was Gen.7-8, and one thing I noted was Gen.8:21(read). Though God promised never again to destroy the world by a flood, man’s heart was still corrupt. And it still is today!

This is the struggle every Christian will have until death. See Rom.7:8, 14ff, noting 8:13. See Titus 2:11-13.

Though it will be a struggle until death, God has made a way for victory. And God has not made the path to victory difficult to understand – it is through Jesus, by way of the cross. See Hebrews 12:1-2.

Now, Jesus made a promise directly related to this truth. Please go with me once again to the encounter between Jesus and Peter after Jesus reveals to His disciples that He is indeed headed for death, the cross. We did not read the full encounter a few moments ago. See Matt.16:24-25.

What was the corruption in Peter that needed to be dealt with when he pulled Jesus aside and rebuked him in Matthew here? It was the very first corruption that appeared in history – pride! (Isa.14).

In order for me to escape the corruption in the world, I must realize that the corruption comes from within me. My evil desires have to be dealt with. My pride must be crushed. My desire for pleasure outside of the will of God must be denied. My selfish ambition must be replaced by a selfless ambition to glorify Christ, just as He replaced any selfish ambition to fulfill the will of His heavenly Father (See Phil.2:5-11).

- Gal.5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.
- Col.3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.
- I Cor.15:31 I die every day – I mean that brothers – just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Peter, **Simon** Peter, learned the truth of Jesus’ precious promise the hard way. Rather than heeding Jesus’ words, on the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter denied that he had any connection with Him. At that moment he made a decision to save his life rather than lose it. Remember what Jesus said beforehand, knowing that Peter would fail? See Luke 22:31-32. Peter did turn back, he did repent. See Luke 22:54-62. How ashamed Peter must have felt, and I have no doubt he struggled with thoughts of whether he would ever again have any kind of close relationship with Jesus Christ. I love the record in Mark’s gospel after the resurrection (see Mark 16:6-7). John records Peter’s encounter with Jesus in Galilee (see John 21). Don’t you find some glorious, gracious humor in this record? Peter has been exhorted by Jesus in regard to his failure, and now is being recommissioned in his ministry to the church. But he still is a very imperfect man. Oh, the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

CONCLUSION

- If I am reading this text correctly, it tells me that genuinely born again believers can become nearsighted and blind. Note v.9b, “forgotten that he ***has been cleansed*** from his past sins.” But it also provides me a way of escaping that kind of corrupt thinking. I must realign my focus in life beyond this present world (which is not my home), daily deny myself and take up my cross. In short, I must make a daily decision to follow Jesus.
- Peter would fail again later in life (see Gal.1), and again he would be rebuked. And I have no doubt that, once again, Peter would humble himself, perhaps weeping as he did, and get right with the Master, again.
- It is a daily battle, and victory is found only at the cross.