

Second Peter

Part 2 – Grace Empowered Godliness

2 Peter 1:3-15

Immediately following his greeting, the apostle Peter moves rapidly into the substance of his letter. Before addressing the danger of false teaching, he reaffirms and applies the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the truth of the gospel. Peter highlights the power of the gospel not only for salvation but also for growth in godliness. Genuine Christians, sharing the same faith as the apostles, are called to diligently pursue maturity and sanctification. The imperative stands on the indicative; the command on the foundation of the promise. Christ has generously given believers everything necessary to grow in godliness, yet believers must labor to actively pursue godliness. This intentional effort towards Christian growth is a mark of true faith and a safeguard against falling away. As Peter's death is looming closer, he prioritizes this essential reminder and seeks to stir up urgency towards grace empowered godliness in the life of the church.

1. Divine Provision (vv. 3–4)

- Christ's own divine power has granted us everything we need for life and godliness. Not the power within ourselves and not general knowledge. This runs against our culture, which insists we already possess within ourselves all we need for this life.
- Life – eternal life in Christ. Yet also the Christian life in the here and now.
- Godliness – literally means good worship, the conforming of our whole life (character, motives, thoughts, words, work, relationships) to the worship of God. This is ours through the knowledge of Jesus.
- Knowledge - “We come to know our friends in different ways than how we come to know the Middle Ages; how we know the population of San Francisco is different from how we know Bach's Brandenburg Concerti. Knowing God is something utterly unique, since God himself is unique.” — John Frame
- No matter what you face in this life, you have been given what you need in Christ to grow. He supplies all of your needs through himself, his Spirit, knowledge of him, his Word, prayer, and his people.
- *Precious and very great promises*: Genesis 3:15, the promise of the covenants, the promised Messiah revealed in Jesus Christ, the promise of his imminent return, and the new heavens and the new earth.

2. Diligent Pursuit of Godliness (vv. 5–7)

- *Make every effort*: this is our work of sanctification. The command to strive rests on the foundation of what Christ has already done. We are not working for salvation. We work out of the security of our salvation.
- The list is ordinary. Commentators generally agree the sequence is not important, nor is the list comprehensive.
- Faith is both foundational and functional. We build upon it and through it. Love is the culmination.
 - Virtue: the same word as "excellence" in v. 3.
 - Knowledge: growing knowledge of God (different from the personal, saving knowledge of v. 3) that every Christian is called to pursue.
 - Self-control: moderation even in regard to good things.
 - Steadfastness: the ability to press on through hard times.
 - Godliness: practical submission to God in every area of life.

- Brotherly affection: philadelphia, our familial love as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Love: agape, the pinnacle of Christian virtue and the glue that holds every other quality together.
- We are to evaluate if we are growing in and practicing these qualities.

3. Assurance Found in Godliness (vv. 8–11)

- Growing in these qualities keeps us effective and fruitful in knowing Jesus. Neglecting them leaves us "so nearsighted that he is blind," spiritually small-minded, self-focused, forgetting we were cleansed from our former sins.
- This echoes John's warning to Laodicea: For you say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing," not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (Rev. 3:17).
Two ways commentators read the warning in vs. 9:
 - Douglas Moo: these are spurious, fake Christians, claiming forgiveness but living as though it makes no difference.
 - Thomas Schreiner: these are genuine but immature believers, weak, backsliding, forgetting what they once knew.
- Either way, it's a serious caution. The Christian life is like swimming upstream — minimal effort means being swept the wrong way. No fruit, no assurance of faith.
- "*Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election*": We don't work to obtain election, but to confirm it.
- Antinomy: Truths that are not contradictory, but which cannot be neatly reconciled.
 - "Purity of life is not improperly called the evidence and proof of election, by which the faithful may not only testify to others that they are the children of God, but also confirm themselves in this confidence." — John Calvin
- For the one who perseveres, there is a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. Michale Green likened it to a marathon runner greeted at the finish line by a delighted, cheering crowd.

4. Reminder to Remember (vv. 12–15)

- Peter isn't telling his readers something new; they've already been established in the truth. But he knows how prone they are to forget.
- Knowing his death is near, Peter commits to stirring them up "by way of reminder" — the Greek carries the force of provoking or awakening, not just a gentle refresh.
- Remembering is a deeply biblical practice: Deuteronomy 4:9, Isaiah 46:9, the Passover, the Lord's Supper: all given to help God's people remember well.