

EXILES

LIVING IN HOPE
1 & 2 PETER

SERMON TITLE: "The Key to Godliness"
SCRIPTURE: 2 Peter 1:1-15

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Identity is an ever-present buzzword. This should especially be true for Christians. We are chosen, loved, forgiven, and secure in Jesus. But Peter reminds us of another part of our Christian identity—we are exiles. The "world as it is" isn't our home. We are pilgrims on a journey, telling others along the way about the wonderful things God has done in calling us out of darkness and into his light. And just like Peter's personality, these two letters that share his name are bold invitations to cling to a living hope in the face of any suffering that may come our way.

What are you doing with what you have?

Do you really need *everything* in your closet, in the attic, and in the garage? Are you a good steward of what's been given to you? What about intangible things like knowledge, freedom, opportunity, or love? Are you thankful for these to the point of action? Or do you strangely hoard them?

What are you doing with what you have?

What about spiritually? In Jesus, we can have forgiveness and grace, but are we sharing forgiveness and grace? And the Holy Spirit has given every follower of Jesus spiritual gifts to be used in and through the church? What are we doing with them?

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian and Hopeful find themselves in the dungeon of Doubting Castle. They were there for several days, and Giant Despair had beat them without mercy. Bunyan writes, "Here then they lay, without one bit of bread, or drop of drink, or any light. They were far from friend and acquaintance, and in this place, Christian had double sorrow" to the point that he thought about ending his life. After being encouraged by Hopeful, and after praying nearly all night, Christian exclaimed, "Ahhh! What a fool am I to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have in my bosom pocket a key called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle!" This is Bunyan asking his readers, "What are you doing with what you have?" Christian had the key to freedom but did not immediately use it. Are we doing the same?

Peter is thinking along these lines in 2 Peter 1. He's telling his friends that they "have everything they need for life and godliness" (1:3), but it seems as though they're not rightly acting on what they have, and Peter is calling to wake up and realize that they have the key to godliness.

Peter also seems to present us with a slight tension. He writes that we "have everything we need for godliness," but also that we should "supplement our faith" with certain things. So, do we have what we need, or do we need to add to what we have? Well, yes. Peter is showing his friends that the seed of faithfulness is already planted in us, but – by the Spirit – we're invited to cultivate it, water it, and watch it grow to look like Jesus. This isn't about legalism or spirituality on our own without God's grace; it's about stewardship and responding to what we have been given in Christ. So, what is it that we already have in seed form that we should be nurturing?

Peter lists things like virtue, steadfastness, self-control, and love (see 1:5-7). It's things like these that are already planted in us in seed form, and we're called to nourish them into a Jesus-like life. And further, Peter says that failure

to do so means that we are nearsighted and blind, and we've forgotten that Jesus has cleansed us from our sins (1:9). Meaning, when we aren't responsible stewards with all that we've been given, it's not honoring to Jesus. Or simply, in Peter's mind...

Godliness is defined in terms of remembering *what* you have, remembering *why* you have it, and responding appropriately.

Remember *what* you have, which is all that pertains to godly living (1:3). Remember *why* you have it, to become partakers in the divine nature, and experience kingdom life with Jesus (1:4, 1:11). And act accordingly; live in such a way that people see Spirit-wrought, Christ-like character in you. This is Peter asking his friends, "What are you doing with what you have?" and then pointing them in the right direction.

In Romans 8, Paul writes, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?" Paul is saying that Jesus is the substance and source of all that we need. Or in Peter's language, Jesus is God's "great and precious promises" (1:4) with skin on. He partook of the messiness of humanity that we might partake of the glories of divinity (1:4). He stooped from the perfection of heaven to the rebellion of earth to show us God's love. He is all that we need. He is the key to godliness. And to rightly remember Christ is no mere intellectual assent, but an invitation to "make every effort" (1:5) to live lives so indistinguishable from his that people only see the grace that he offers.

Discussion Starters

Have someone read 2 Peter 1:1-15...

1. Where in your life do feel the greatest need for stewardship (to be responsible with what you have)?
2. Which of the ideas in verse 5-7 is most present and least present in your life?
3. When do you most feel the truth of 2 Peter 1:3, that you've been given everything you need for life and godliness?
4. Who do you know whose virtuous life could be described with the language of 2 Peter 1:3-11?
5. What causes you to do not rightly remember what we have in Christ? Or, what makes you forgetful of all that God has given us in Christ?
6. What is your biggest "take away" from this passage and/or this message?