***“Diligent Growth”***

**Chico Alliance Church**

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**Introduction**

We didn’t quite cover everything in two messages as I had planned. Today we finish out exploration of 2 Peter 1:1-11. The first part of the passage addressed God’s powerful provision or resources. Last week we addressed Our practice or responsibility in light of His Provision. From verses 1-4 we learned that God has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through a true knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

We also learned that God has granted priceless and magnificent promises so that through Jesus, we might escape the corruption of the desire-driven old nature and share the wonder of a new divine nature. We become a new creature. Peter had no hesitation to remind them of things they had already been taught. Based on God’s monumental provision, Peter called for a corresponding practice. With great resources comes great responsibility. If I supply you with a million dollars for ministry, you bear a great responsibility to invest that money wisely.

The outline of this passage looks something like this.

1. God’s Provision / Resources 1-4
   1. God granted everything pertaining to daily life and godliness
   2. God granted promises pertaining to initial life change

Today we will deal with the second part of the outline.

1. Our Practice / Responsibility 4-11
   1. The Specific Behavior (Seven character traits)
   2. The Spectacular Benefits (Four benefits )

This section organizes neatly into two parts.

1. The encouragement to develop seven specific character traits
2. The benefits of developing seven specific character traits

Last week we touched on those seven traits.

1. The Specified Behavior

Peter connected the command to develop (supply) these traits to or by faith to the facts previously pointed out.

Now for this very reason

The fact that God has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness

The fact that God has granted us promises pertaining to sharing God’s nature and escaping the old nature.

Peter instructed the readers to supply arduous action to firm faith. That is the central instruction followed by seven areas of development.

Two points…

**First**, this intentional growth is to be embraced with diligence.

“having applied all diligence”

The term diligence indicates an “eagerness to do something with the implication of readiness to expend energy and effort.”

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Romans 12:10-13

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

True faith is demonstrated by diligent action.

Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (diligent). Titus 2:14

So what traits does Peter call us to diligently pursue?

The **second** factor is Peter expected that the development of these characteristics to be continual.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing…2 Peter 1:8

The word translated “increasing” is the word of abundance, make or be more, super abound.

The implication is that we never arrive. It is a lifetime pursuit. We can never be too moral. We can never know too much. We can never have too much patience or perseverance. We can never have too much self-control.

We can never be too godly. We can never have too much brotherly kindness. We can never love too much.

Listen to Paul’s greeting to the believers in the city of Thessalonica.

*We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4*

Notice his prayer for grace and peace. He also mentioned the growth of their faith evidence by their ever increasing love for one another along with their perseverance in afflictions. These are some of the same character traits mentioned by Peter here. Paul called the Thessalonians to ever increasing love.

Now as to the brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to unconditionally love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more… 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

Paul prayed for that same church to be an example of the kind of love and perseverance demonstrated by and supplied by Christ.

May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. 2 Thessalonians 3:5

Don’t ever think that you have not need for growth. Peter instructs us to diligently pursue greater and greater levels of these characteristics in our life. Revisit these traits and rate them on a scale of 1-10. They are all to be present and growing. It is kind of like the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal 5. The fruit of the Spirit is the demonstrated character of one who is directed and empowered or filled by the Holy Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. There is ALWAYS room for developing the things listed here by Peter. They are also the result of a life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence in your faith supply…

If all of these things were present and continually increasing in our life, what a difference it would make in our life and relationships.

Peter included four powerful benefits of continually cultivating these character traits. Peter signaled each benefit with “**FOR**” indicating a reason for doing something.

1. The Benefits explained

*For if these qualities are yours and are increasing…*

1. You will enjoy a fruitful life 1:8

***FOR*** *if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The development of these traits results in a fruitful life. They have value in developing our relationship with God especially. In fact, John emphatically said that failure to love people exposes a lack of love for God.

*The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:8*

*If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 1 John 4:20*

If we have a dynamic (ever-growing) relationship or knowledge of Jesus, all of these traits would also be continuing to manifest in our life and relationships. They would open more and more opportunities for genuine ministry. They would draw attention to the wonder of Jesus in our life.

If you take the reverse side of this principle a frightening truth emerges.

FOR if these qualities are NOT yours and are NOT increasing, they render you (cause you to be)useless and unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If they are absent or stagnant you really don’t know Jesus. You relationship with Jesus is deficient. Those who really know Jesus will increasingly live like Jesus. One day we will be like Him because we will truly see and know Him.

1. You will be alert and aware

***FOR*** *he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.*

Not to practice these things blinds us to spiritual things. The readers of the book of Hebrews suffered dullness or blindness due to lack of practice.

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Hebrews 5:14

A deficit in any of the areas listed deadens our spiritual perception.

*The intent (of these two terms), therefore, is to say that a person without spiritual virtues is as blind as someone who contracts his eyelids (or squints). With this illustration, Peter wishes to say that a person who neglects the cultivation of spiritual values is blind to the truth of God’s Word. Baker Commentary)*

Moral impurity, ignorance, uncontrolled passions, impatience, lack of true devotion to God, broken relationships and indifference to the needs of others all indicate a failure to really understand all that God has done. Failure to exhibit or continually develop these things is a clear indication that we just don’t understand who we are in Christ and will enjoy little spiritual impact in our life. This verse seems to indicate that the real reason we sin is not because we are sinners, but because we forgot that we are no longer sinners. If we did truly understand the amazing truth or our new relationship to the Trinity through the work of Jesus, we would live different realizing we ARE different. John referenced a blindness that comes from a failure to love.

*But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and lives in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 1 John 2:10-12*

One reason John wrote is so that the new believers would realize their forgiveness and purification from sin so as to truly love and forgive others. Rather than tell people where they fail, we really need to help them realize their true identity in Christ. If we continually go around identifying with who we WERE, we will never live up to who we ARE.

1. You will never stumble

*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you;* ***FOR*** *as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble*

What a bold statement. We are to first make sure we have truly received and responded to God’s call to Himself. Be sure you are a sharer in divine nature as the base of diligently living out your faith.

Our choosing (election) took place before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Our calling took place at a particular point in our life when we heard and responded to Him by a faith received by Him. Be eager or diligent to look at your life carefully and honestly.

*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 13:5*

Ask God to witness to your spirit regarding your status.

*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

*Romans 8:16-17*

As long as we continue to grow in these qualities, through trust in God’s work, we will never stumble. The Greek here is unmistakably emphatic. “You will in no wise stumble. Earlier we cited John’s statement about the one not loving stumbling around in the darkness. However he also state that…

*The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.*

There are a ton of passages that address the idea of not stumbling – here are a few.

*Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble. Psalm 119:165*

*The LORD sustains all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time. You open your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. Psa 145:14*

Proverbs declares the benefits of knowledge.

*The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, By understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew. My son, let them not vanish from your sight; Keep sound wisdom and discretion, so they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck. Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught. Proverbs 3:19-26*

*Hear, my son, and accept my sayings And the years of your life will be many. I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; And if you run, you will not stumble. Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life. Proverbs 4:10-13*

*In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You. For You have delivered my soul from death, Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living. Psalm 56:11-13*

Jesus took extended teaching time with His disciples just before He went to the cross recorded in John 13-17).

It is called the “Upper Room Discourse” by many. Jesus touched on numerous vital subjects. Near the end, He made this statement.

*These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. John 16:1*

When we fail to practice these things, we leave a trail of grief. The reality is that we all stumble or fall or offend God and others. Only when we diligently focus on living out the faith God has worked in will we avoid stumbling.

*We all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. James 3:2*

There will be less stumbling if we concentrate on diligently seeking to develop these character traits.

Jude assured us that God is able to keep us from stumbling.

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. Jude 1:24-25*

1. You will enjoy a welcome entrance to the kingdom

***FOR*** *in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. 2 Peter 1:8-11*

How we live this life on the present earth impacts what we enjoy both in heaven and the new earth. There is reward. John indicated that some will shrink away in shame at his coming. (1 John 2:28). Paul indicated that some will lose rewards at His coming.

*According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15*

There will be a future judgment for both Christians and non-Christians. Christians face the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul referenced that future judgment as a motivation to live pleasing to God.

*Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10*

Unbelievers will be raised to face the Great White Throne Judgment described in Revelation.

When we intentionally and diligently develop godly character throughout our life on this earth, our heavenly entrance will be a triumphant one. It is too bad we have lost the skill of living life here in light of our life hereafter.

What can we take away from this passage?

**First**, make certain you have truly responded to His call to be part of His family.

Only then does the promise related to sharing His nature apply to you.

Only then do you have access to His multiplied grace and peace that provides EVERYTHING you need related to life and godliness.

**Second**, purpose to intentionally and diligently pursue and develop godliness by working out your salvation with fear and trembling.

*Putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. 1 Peter 2:1-3*

BE sure you have really “taste the kindness” of God.

**Third**, focus on growing in moral excellence, spiritual insight, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brother love, and unconditional love.

If you do…

You will experience a fruitful life.

You will be more spiritually aware.

You will never stumble.

Your entrance to glory will be a moment of great triumph and reward.