

Believers are Exhorted to Attain Godliness in this Life

2 Peter 1:1-11

2 Peter 1:1-4 - *“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:*

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Background Notes

Most likely this epistle was written shortly before the apostle Peter was martyred in AD 67, a few years after the apostle wrote his first epistle. Conditions for believers had grown worse in the intervening years. The Roman persecution of Christians had increased. When much of the city of Rome was destroyed in the great fire in AD 64, Nero was able shift the blame to the Christians. Christianity was now illegal in the Roman Empire. The Roman persecutions of Christians increased, and they continued on until the 4th century.

However Christians were not only facing problems from outside the Church – they were also facing the serious problem of false teaching within the Church. The seeds of the false teaching of Gnosticism were already beginning to infiltrate into the early Church.

In the midst of this persecution on the one hand, and false teaching on the other hand, Peter exhorted the early Christians to be faithful! In fact, besides exhorting the believers to remain faithful in difficult times, Peter encouraged them to actually grow spiritually during these difficult times. So 2 Peter calls Christians to spiritual growth when the going is tough.

And this exhortation is not just for the Christians of the 1st century – it’s for Christians today as well. Is the road of life difficult for you right now? Are you finding it hard to live the Christian life? If so, 2 Peter will challenge you to faithfully endure through your problems and difficulties, and indeed even to grow spiritually!

Doctrinal Points

1. God has granted the believer everything necessary to attain godliness in this life.

Verse 1: *“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (v1).* The Christian faith rests on the basis of *“the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”* There is no other basis for our faith.

Notice that the deity of our Lord Jesus is brought out in the phrase, *“our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”* Only one person is in view here: our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is **God!**

Verse 3: *“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.”* The “us” in verse 3 were Peter’s fellow believers who, along with the apostle Peter, had the same precious Christian faith.

Verses 3-4 assure us that God has given us everything we need to live a godly life - to maintain a godly lifestyle. Do you find it difficult to live a godly life? Is your lifestyle characterized by godliness? The solution to your problem is found in these verses.

The key to godliness is to get to know the Lord better! Verse 3: *“...through the **knowledge of Him** who called us by glory and virtue” [emphasis added].* The better we get to know the Lord, the more we will become like Him. The more we walk with the Lord, the more we will hate doing things that are not pleasing to Him. This is the key to godliness!

Furthermore, we have new life in Christ - and this new life has a divine nature! Verse 4: *“By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*

You see, when we become Christians we don’t just receive forgiveness of sins and a “ticket to Heaven.” When we become Christians, we literally are **born again** - we’re **new creations** in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). This new life that we have received does not sin, because it is the life of God. This new life has a divine nature (v4). This new life is automatically godly. This is the new life within us that is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Then why do we still sin? Until we get to heaven and receive our new bodies, we still have our sinful nature, or the flesh. Until we’re with the Lord, and the old sinful nature is gone forever, we are to live by the great and precious promises that God has given us in His Word, *“that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*

As we believe and act on the promises that God has given us in His Word, we will increasingly participate in the new life that God has given us. As we live in the new Spirit-empowered life, we will increasingly escape the “*corruption that is in the world*” – the worldly desires (lusts) of our old sinful nature. That’s what godliness is all about.

1 Corinthians 10:13 is a great example of one of those “great and precious promises.” 1 Corinthians 10:13: “*No temptation [or test] has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted [or tested] beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*” This verse promises that when we face temptation or a test of our faith, we do not have to yield - because God will provide a “way of escape”!

Do you believe that promise? If you do, then act on it! When you face temptation or test of your faith, look for the “way of escape.” God has **promised** to provide a way of escape so that believers will be able to bear the tests or temptations that come into our lives.

As you believe and act on the precious promises of God, you **will** become a more godly Christian. These promises are **guaranteed** to promote godliness in your life. God has granted the believer everything necessary to attain godliness in this life.

2. God has commanded the believer to use diligence to attain godliness in this life.

Verses 5-11: “*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

¹⁰ *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

Seven characteristics of godliness are listed in these verses, and we as believers are to add these virtues to our faith. In fact, we are to use **all diligence** to add them to our faith and our character! It’s not an option - it’s a command!

The seven characteristics are: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. These sound very similar to the “fruits of the Spirit” that are listed in Galatians 5: love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

How can we add these virtues to our faith? We must diligently allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to develop our Christian character. We can't do it on our own! But the Lord can - if we let Him.

We need to use all diligence to spend time in God's Word. We need to use all diligence to walk with the Lord and do what is pleasing to Him. We need to use all diligence to think of others rather than just serving ourselves. Then Christian character and godliness will be developed and will become more evident in our lives.

In addition, as a result we will get to know the Lord Himself in a deeper way. Verse 8: *"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* That is, not just knowing about Jesus, but real knowledge of our Lord that will produce fruit in our lives.

And our salvation will be made more sure. Verse 10: *"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure."* Verse 10 does not mean that true Christian salvation is in question. No! Verse 10 means that *godliness in our lives is evidence of our sure salvation.*

If we do these things, we will never stumble, and an *abundant* entrance into God's eternal kingdom awaits us. God has commanded the believer to use diligence to attain godliness in this life.

Practical Application

What kind of entrance into Heaven do you want?

Every true believer in our Lord Jesus Christ will enter Heaven - but verse 11 indicates that there will be a more "abundant entrance" into Heaven for believers whose lives are characterized by godliness. *"For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

What kind of entrance do you want into Heaven? Do you want to hear a wonderful "Welcome Home!" - with yellow ribbons? Then ***practice godliness in this life!***

The worldly believers of verse 9 will make it into Heaven - but not with an abundant entrance. Verse 9: *"For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins."* This verse is not referring to unbelievers – it's talking about worldly believers. Worldly believers who live selfish lives are shortsighted and unfruitful Christians, who even forget the gift of their salvation.

Godly believer or worldly believer? Into which category do you fall? What kind of entrance into Heaven do you want?