

Book: 2 Peter
Series: *True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*
Lesson 3: *Our Productive Faith, Part 1*
Text: 2 Peter 1:5-11
Date: Sunday, September 9, 2012

Colonial Hills
ABE
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

Last year, some teachers found it beneficial to send out a pre-lesson and/or post-lesson email to their students in order to help prepare for or follow-up on the lesson. When helpful, feel free to forward on the full lesson notes in order to facilitate further study.

Be sure to maintain good eye contact with your class/table and to vary your rate, pitch, and volume. This will help you sustain good attention from those listening.

This week's introduction is lengthy, but it serves the purpose of (1) introducing the topic, (2) creating need for the topic, and (2) placing the topic within the larger context of 2 Peter. Feel free to use as much or as little of the introduction as you deem necessary.

Finally, you'll notice that I included a lot of quotations throughout this lesson. I did so to corroborate my own statements, and I hope you will be benefited by them. It's also very likely that these quotations will state more clearly what I had attempted to communicate. Therefore, feel free to ignore these when you teach or to pick and chose ones that you think would be most helpful.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

2 Peter 1:5-11 – *Our Productive Faith, Part 2*

INTRODUCTION

2 Peter 1:5-11 deals with the doctrine of sanctification—that is, the process by which God brings His saving work to bear upon our practice and sin’s power through the gospel accomplishments of Jesus Christ. This passage (1:1-11) and its teaching needs to become very familiar to believers, for without it we can fall into a variety of errors in our practice of true faith and true living.

Some fall into the error of a legalistic approach to sanctification, as they seek to conform themselves to a standard and deal with the pride and guilt that inevitably result from that; some of these even tie the issue of eternal security to this. Others have the opposite problem of leniency or laziness in their sanctification; for a variety of reasons and with a variety of explanations, they simply wait for God to grow, change, and transform them, and they offer little to no personal effort in the process. Others still recognize the errors of both sides and see in this passage and others that sanctification is a cooperative venture between God and man. Yet, partly as a reaction against a legalistic model of sanctification and partly as (right) commitment to a God-initiated model of sanctification, they are still reluctant to talk about man’s responsibility in the process (although they would not deny it).

The apostles knew no such errors as they wrote about God’s salvation in the process we call sanctification, and while they may not have understood the tension between God’s part and man’s part in it, they wrote about both with clarity.

We recognize from Scripture that there is a difference between the moment-in-time salvation from sin’s penalty in justification and the progressive nature of salvation from sin’s power in sanctification. However, it is perhaps an over-distinction between the two that has caused confusion and hindered confidence among God’s people. Sanctification naturally and unavoidably flows out of justification (cf. Romans 6; Titus 2), which is why Paul would write in Colossians 2:6, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” In our series through Colossians (lesson 6), we observed the following about this verse:

[The Colossian believers] had received Him as “Christ Jesus the Lord”—that is the Messiah, Savior, and Master—and were to continue in that same personal acknowledgement (cf. 1:23). They had received Him as supreme and sufficient (cf. 1:15-23), as God and Savior, and they were to abide in that same understanding. They had received Him by faith unto immediate fruitfulness and growth (cf. 1:3-8), and were to maintain such faithfulness. MacArthur adds,

“In broader terms, however, walking in Christ means living in union with Him. It means to maintain a lifestyle patterned after His. ‘The one who says he abides in Him,’ the apostle John writes, ‘ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked’ (1 John 2:6). When faced with the dilemmas that confront Christians in their daily lives, the guideline should be, ‘What would Jesus do in this situation?’”

Such continuation in Christ and Christlikeness was simply the result of God already “rooting” them in Christ at salvation. In Him, they had everything they needed (II Peter 1:3) for continuing in the faith (1:23) and being presented perfect before God (1:28). This continued maturity would come through (1) “being built up in Christ” as they studied the “Word of His grace” (Acts 20:32; II Peter 3:18) and “beheld His glory” in those pages (II Corinthians 3:18-4:6), and through (2) “being established in the faith,” that is, the apostolic, gospel truth they had been “taught” (cf. 1:6-7). While the believer should pursue this stability in the gospel by preaching its realities to Himself and practicing them in life, the passive mood of this participle demonstrates that God must accomplish such strengthening (cf. Romans 16:25; II Thessalonians 2:16–17; I Peter 5:10; Jude 24). Furthermore, the passive nature of both participles further depict God’s commitment to building us up and establishing us.

As Christ was sufficient for reconciliation (1:20-23), He is also sufficient for our maturation (1:28-29)—indeed, He is the prototype and standard of such maturity. Having been rooted

in Christ, now being built up in Christ and established in His teaching, we will come “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Saving grace saves—and that means both justifies and sanctifies—that’s just what it does! Simply put, sanctification is becoming (in practice) what God has already made us (in position). And since God gave us faith to respond to Him in obedience and submission at salvation, He’s already armed us to respond appropriately to Him throughout salvation (i.e., throughout sanctification), for “the righteous man shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).¹

Therefore, while saving faith is a gift from God, (in a mystery) man is responsible to respond in faith—both in justification and sanctification. Yes, God gives faith, and yes, man must exercise faith. Yes, God has ordained good works for us (Ephesians 2:10), and yes, man must obey and practice those good works. While the natural man cannot respond in this way, the saved man both can and should respond in this way in obedience to his Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and as an assuring testimony of his position in Christ. This is sanctification and the God-ordained means of assurance for the Christian.

What we’re saying here is, in a nutshell, saving faith is productive faith—it produces a lifestyle consistent with its profession, which in turn produces confidence in one’s completeness in Christ. In this passage, we learn clearly that such production starts with God

¹ MacArthur overstates the point a bit to emphasize the point: “The only legitimate basis for assurance has nothing to do with a past event when one “made a decision,” but is based on the reality of present trust in Christ’s atoning work, as evidenced by one’s present pattern of faith, obedience, righteousness, and love for the Lord (cf. 1 John 1:6–7; 2:6).” He then balances that out by quoting the 1689 Baptist Confession to highlight what has traditionally been considered the three great sources for assurance of salvation—[1] faith in the doctrine of salvation personally enjoyed, [2] the natural and external manifestation of such faith in transformed living, and [3] the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit: “The certainty of salvation enjoyed by the saints of God is not mere conjecture and probability based upon fallible hope, but [1] an infallible assurance of faith based upon the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel. It also results from [2] the inward evidences of the graces of the Holy Spirit, for to those graces God speaks promises. Then again, it is based upon [3] the testimony of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of adoption, for He bears His witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. Such witness results in the keeping of our hearts both humble and holy. Rom. 8:15, 16; Heb. 6:11, 17–19; 2 Peter 1:4, 5, 10, 11; 1 John 3:1–3” (John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 35, 38).

and must be completed through His resources; nonetheless, He both enables and demands our cooperation.

While mystery will remain, let’s allow this passage to connect some of the dots, shed light on some of the tensions involved, provide answers to some of our more pressing questions, and shape for us a better understanding of what our daily relationship with and responses to Christ should look like. We’ll do this by considering five aspects of faith’s production.

To put this lesson in the context of our overarching theme, let us first pause for a summary:

Based upon the provisions of God for you (vv. 1-4), make every effort to cultivate the conditions in which God can produce in you the qualities (vv. 5-7) which ensure that your Christian walk is vibrant and stable and which indicate that your faith is genuine (vv. 8-11). Continually keep this pattern in front of you (vv. 12-15), for it is from God (vv. 16-21). Furthermore, it is the only antidote for twisted doctrine and twisted morals (chapters 2-3).²

THE REASON FOR FAITH’S PRODUCTION (v. 5)

Although the King James Version translates the first phrase of verse 5 with “and beside this,” the original construction should be translated “for this very reason” as maintained by BDAG and practiced by all the modern translations.

Peter has already taken four verses to lay out the basis, foundation, grounds, and reason for faith’s production. Put simply, we should be productive in our faith, because God has already been productive in our faith. Or, we should add to our faith, because God has already added to our faith. It was nothing we did that made our faith precious (last week’s lesson). Our faith is precious because of everything God wrapped up into it—righteousness, grace, peace, a true relationship with God, magnificent promises, participation in the divine nature,

² Dr. Jim Berg, “Summary of 2 Peter 1,” a portion of his notes given to Dean of Students staff at Bob Jones University prior to the writing and publishing of his book, *Essential Virtues*.

deliverance from corruption, and “everything” else necessary for life and godliness. Indeed, God has already lavished us with benefits, and the nature of this list demonstrates that both in its beginning and its continuation, God intends to richly “add” to our faith. Therefore, we should add to our faith!

To put it another way, verses 1-4 tell us that true faith is a package—a package of belief, benefits, and behaviors (i.e., “godliens”). Therefore, as part of the package, we need to ensure we’re adding the right behaviors (vv. 5-11). True faith will compel us to do this, and we must cooperate with it.

We’ll allow some others to say here what we’ve already stated:

The list of virtues found in vv. 5–7 stands in tension to the promises given in vv. 2–4. What appears to be a synergism of effort or even a contradiction (God supplies the basis, the promises, the grace, the power, etc., while believers must also provide the faith, excellence, etc.) in reality encapsulates the mystery of sanctification. Each believer is responsible before God for his conduct and spiritual growth, yet that growth could not take place without God’s prior work and constant enabling. We must not neglect our responsibility, yet the enabling and the credit is God’s. Paul says the same thing: “Continue working out your salvation with humility and dependence, for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort ... is God” (Phil 2:12–13).³

Because of our new birth and the precious promises and the divine power offered us in Christ we cannot sit back and rest content with ‘faith’ (cf. Jas 2:20). The grace of God demands, as it enables, effort in man.⁴

Because of what has been done for the readers (escape from corruption) is being done for them (participation in the divine nature) and will be done for them (those promises that are yet

to be fulfilled, to which our author will come in 1:11), they are to grow in virtue.⁵

The logical relationship between vv. 3–4 and vv. 5–7 is crucial. Verses 5–7 summon the readers to a life of virtue, but vv. 3–4 remind us that a life of godliness is rooted in and dependent upon God’s grace. Believers should live in a way that pleases God because Christ has given them everything they need for life and godliness. The indicative of God’s gift precedes and undergirds the imperative that calls for human exertion. Peter did not lapse, therefore, into works righteousness here since he grounded his exhortations in God’s merciful gifts.⁶

Verses 3–4 lay out the incredible gift of God in allowing his power, his Spirit to be a part of the believer’s life as a divine helper in the process of transformation. Verses 5–7 show that each believer also has a role to play in this transformation. A resolve, a desire, a commitment to growth and transformation must be part of the individual believer’s life if the Holy Spirit is to be effective.⁷

The gospel is absolutely free from (1) the will of God; (2) the finished work of Christ; and (3) the wooing of the Spirit, but once received, becomes a cost-everything daily discipleship. This is the paradox of the gospel. It is a gift, but also a covenant with privileges and responsibilities. The true gospel affects the mind, heart, and hand!⁸

Because of all the “precious and magnificent promises” (v. 4) God has given believers and because they have received “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (v. 3), for this very reason they must respond with maximum effort toward living

³ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition*. (Biblical Studies Press, 2006). Note #27.

⁴ Michael Green, vol. 18, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 85.

⁵ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), 177.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 37, 1, *2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 296-97.

⁷ David Walls and Max Anders, vol. 11, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 110.

⁸ Robert James Dr. Utley, vol. Volume 2, *The Gospel According to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 277.

for Christ. This prescription echoes Paul's exhortation to the Philippians: "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12–13)" God, through Christ, granted believers a perfect and complete salvation (cf. Eph. 1:7; 3:17–21; Col. 2:10; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9); yet, paradoxically, He requires that they work it out by applying all diligence (cf. Col. 1:28–29).⁹

Because of all the God-given blessings in vv. 3,4, the believer cannot be indifferent or self-satisfied. Such an abundance of divine grace calls for total dedication.¹⁰

Application: From this first point, we learn that faith's production in verses 5-11 will only be proportional to our understanding of faith's precious nature in verses 1-4. In other words, if we don't get verses 1-4, we won't practice verses 5-11. A belief in, understanding of, and grateful response to God's gracious gifts of salvation through Christ is the basis of faith's production. Without it, faith will be stagnant and assurance will be lacking.

So, how well have you unwrapped the package of true faith? Are you preaching to yourself daily the precious riches of your standing in Christ? When you are tempted to be stagnant (or rebellious) in your obedient cooperation with God's salvation, do you walk by faith, rehearse its sufficiency, and chose to respond reasonably (i.e., obediently or cooperatively)?



What would this application practically look like in our daily lives? How do we prepare ourselves to respond in this way? How does this parallel what Paul does in Colossians 3:1-11? *Open discussion.*

Transition: God has obviously been proactive and complete in His efforts on behalf of our faith. Therefore, we should complement not only His activity (the reason for faith's production), but also His energy (the diligence of faith's production).

THE DILIGENCE OF FAITH'S PRODUCTION (v. 5)

The manner or means in which we are to engage productively in our faith is by "giving all diligence." This is two words in the original language. For the word "giving" (Gk. *par-eis-pherō*) most lexicons suggest the translation "bring every effort to bear" or "do one's very best" or "try very hard."¹¹ However, it could literally and woodenly be translated according to its parts, "to bring into alongside." With this etymology in mind, two lexicons are particularly helpful. One suggests the idea of "adding in a second effort"¹² and the other, "To bring forth something additional, to contribute in addition to."¹³ This begs the question, "To what are we adding a second effort?" or "To what are we bringing something additional?"

This word is not telling us what we should add to our faith; that is taken care of by a later word (i.e., "add" in our KJV or *epichoregeo* in the Greek). Instead, this word is again highlighting that we are cooperating with God in faith's production. His effort was described in verses 1-4; now, we are being instructed to "add in [our] second effort" or to "bring forth [our own diligence] in addition to." Adds MacArthur,

Applying (pareispherō) means "to bring in," or "to supply besides" and implies making a strong effort to provide something necessary. In view of and parallel to God's endeavor in providing salvation, believers are compelled to call

⁹ MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 39.

¹⁰ The MacArthur Study Bible, ed. John MacArthur, Jr., electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 2 Pe 1:5.


¹¹ BDAG; Louw-Nida; Dictionary of Biblical Languages; Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament

¹² Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, vol. 4, Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 299. See also, Green, 85.

¹³ Spiros Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

on all their regenerate faculties to live godly lives (3:14; cf. Rom. 6:22; Gal. 6:9; Eph. 5:7–9; Heb. 6:10–12).¹⁴

So, even here, in the phrase that uses specific words to highlight our effort (as we'll see in a moment), we're being reminded that our effort is only possible and effective when enabled by and joined to God's work. Both parties—the divine and human sides—must bring their diligence to bear upon faith for it to be productive. God's side is never questioned; thus, the application and exhortation is for us. But, let us be gloriously reminded here—we cooperate *with* God!

 **Application:** Does your daily walk show evidence of a cooperation with and dependence upon God to establish His salvation in your practice? How does one express cooperation with God (“bringing our effort to bear alongside God's”) in sanctification? *Open discussion.*

The word “diligence” (Gk. *spoudn*) means “earnest commitment in discharge of an obligation or experience of a relationship” (BDAG). It is translated “haste” (Mark 6:25; Luke 1:39), “zeal” (Romans 12:8, 11—ESV), “earnestness” (2 Corinthians 7:11–12; 8:16; Hebrews 6:11—ESV), and “eager” (Jude 3—ESV). It definitely carries the idea of being all-out and all-in, allowing this productivity to become a passionate focus of our daily activity (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:7; Hebrews 12:14–15). As a practical help, compare I Corinthians 15:10 with the last phrase of 2 Timothy 3:4.


Finally, the word “add” (in “add to your faith”) is an active imperative, translated elsewhere as “give, supply, or support” (BDAG).¹⁵ This word family is used only seven times in the New Testament¹⁶ and every usage except here is in reference to what

¹⁴ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 39.

¹⁵ “The word *epichorēgō*, *add*, is a fascinating one. It is a vivid metaphor drawn from the Athenian drama festivals, in which a rich individual, called the *chorēgos*, since he paid the expenses of the chorus, joined with the poet and the state in putting on the plays. This could be an expensive business, and yet *chorēgi* vied with one another in the generosity of their equipment and training of the choruses. Thus the word came to mean generous and costly co-operation. The Christian must engage in this sort of co-operation with God in the production of a Christian life which is a credit to him” (Green, 86.).

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 9:10; Galatians 3:5; Ephesians 4:16; Philippians 1:19; Colossians 2:19; 2 Peter 1:5, 11

God given (including its usage in 2 Peter 1:11—“ministered”). Perhaps Peter is again subtly stressing what he's obviously stated elsewhere—that we must actively work to produce a lifestyle consistent with true faith, and that such activity originates from and is complemented by God's.

 **Application:** What would such “diligence” in Christian productivity look like? *Open discussion.*

Transition: Peter now gets very practical as he discusses the expression of faith's production. Here's exactly what we should be producing.

THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH'S PRODUCTION (vv. 5-7)

We're going to delay most of our explanation and application of this point until our next lesson. In the meantime, the chart on the last page will give you an overview of our upcoming study.

Meanwhile, it is probably helpful to note here that Peter doesn't tell us that productive faith is participation in the church's programs or involvement in the local charities, etc. He doesn't institutionalize or “programize” faith's production. While faith's productivity may evidence itself in such involvement, Peter's primary emphasis is on the character of one's heart or the aroma of one's life.

Transition: The details of faith's production now give way to a serious question. Verses 8–11 answer the question, “So what? What's the big deal about how productive my faith is?” Peter's fourth consideration about faith's production deals with its purpose.

THE RESULT OF FAITH'S PRODUCTION (vv. 8-9)

Peter states the result of faith's production both positively (v. 8) and negatively (v. 9).

1. *The result stated positively—production leads to spiritual confidence*

Peter starts out by assuming that verses 5-7 have taken place. He does this by way of a conditional phrase: "if if these things be in you and abound." "Be in you" is a stronger verb than the typical term for "to be or exist," denoting actual possession in some passages (Acts 3:6; 4:37; 28:7); thus, one translation argues for a rendering of "if these things are really yours." "Abound[ing]" is better taken as "increasing" and "refers to possessing more than enough, even too much, of something" (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:15).¹⁷ We could translate, then, the conditional clause this way: "If you can claim ownership of these virtues on the basis of their abounding increase in your life."

Here, again, Scripture cares less about our profession and more about our practice. It's one thing to claim to be virtuous, knowledgeable, self-controlled, etc.; it's another thing to actually have those qualities (cf. James 3:13). The practice (i.e., "increase") of those attributes is proof positive that they actually exist (i.e., "be in you").

Such proof positive accomplishes guarantees this result: it "makes" (lit., "appoints" or "causees") you to be "neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Barren" refers to the the idle or lazy person (1 Timothy 5:13; Titus 1:12) who is either unable or unwilling to work (Matt. 20:3, 6) and is thus unproductive, even worthless (Matthew

¹⁷ MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 43. But, "[increasing] could possibly suggest to English readers that we are able to calculate our improvement in godliness as each year passes, as if we become five percent more loving each year. What Peter wanted to emphasize was not that precise. His point was that godly qualities must both exist and overflow in the lives of his readers" (Schreiner, 302.). Thus, "that means they are to be personally yours and constantly growing more dominant" (Dr. Jim Berg, *Essential Virtues*, p. 6).

12:36; James 2:20).¹⁸ "Unfruitful" builds on this term and is a result of the first. While it can be used literally to refer to a tree or mountain, Scripture uses it consistently metaphorically to refer to unprofitable responses to God's Word (Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19), base versus beneficial works (Ephesians 5:11; cf. Titus 3:14), and unproductive prayer (2 Corinthians 14:14). In fact, it is used to define the false teachers themselves in Jude 12, the sister-passage to 2 Peter 2.

So, without these qualities, a believer is ineffective and useless, and he is "indistinguishable from an evildoer or a superficial believer."¹⁹ These qualities, then, allow a believer to be spiritually productive and salvifically confident. This is further highlighted by the final phrase of the verse, "in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here again, Peter ties knowledge and behavior together—true faith is knowing Jesus personally and living His way practically. After all, Jesus said that He was not only the "truth," but also the "way" (John 14:6), and He told us to "learn from Him" by "taking His yoke upon us" (Matthew 11:28-30).²⁰ Cf. John 7:17

¹⁸ "Barren" means stalled or stuck, and therefore, ineffective. An automobile whose engine has stalled isn't going anywhere. It will have to be pulled, pushed, or fixed on the spot by someone else if it is to move off the side of the road and get on with its journey" (Berg, 6.)

¹⁹ *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 2 Pe 1:8.

²⁰ Jim Berg provides a helpful illustration here (pp. 7-8):

Today those who wish to have guidance on improving their physical condition will consult a personal trainer. He is hired to evaluate his client's current physical condition and map out an exercise, diet, and lifestyle routine that will enhance overall well-being. The trainer will interact with his client daily, if necessary, to insure that he stays on the right track. He provides periods of instruction about various disciplines that must become lifelong habits for long-term health. He is available to answer questions about how certain exercise routines are to be carried out and why certain parts of his trainee's diet are so strategic to his health. In the process of interacting with his personal trainer over the course of time, the trainee gets to know the trainer quite well. He learns much about the trainer's personality and interests. He may even become acquainted with the trainer's family, upbringing, and professional goals. It is quite possible that the trainer takes on more of the status of a close family member or of a personal friend over time.

A similar relationship develops between the believer and Jesus Christ as the believer diligently takes instruction from his Lord and seeks to faithfully carry it out for his own spiritual well-being and for Christ's glory. Christ is the perfect Trainer! He made us, so He understands our makeup, and He made us for a purpose, so He understands what we must become in order to fulfill that mission.

A believer, however, who stays home from the "gym" can never develop into a "healthy" Christian. But beyond that, he will never get to know the Trainer well if he seldom shows up. If

Therefore, if you are practicing verses 5-7, the result is spiritual effectiveness and the resulting confidence that you truly know Jesus.²¹ The alternative is what Peter addresses in verse 9.



Application: What does the word “increasing” suggest about the manner in which a believer comes to “possess” these qualities? *Open discussion—some thoughts: (1) we’re never done increasing; (2) we shouldn’t be waiting for the crises to cultivate these things.*

2. **The result stated negatively—lack of production leads to spiritual blindness**

Peter describes another believer in verse 9, but unlike the one characterized by the fruitfulness and assurance of verse 8, this person “lacks” (lit. “to not be present”) the spiritual qualities of verses 5-7. This believer is described as being spiritually “blind” or “near-sighted” (cf. Isaiah 59:10; Revelation 3:17). This is further explained by the next phrase, which is literally rendered, “since he has received [Gk. *lambano*] forgetfulness [Gk. *lethe*] about the purification from his former sins.” The phrase “received forgetfulness” could connote either (1) that God has ordained this “blindness” to be a chastening consequence for spiritual unfruitfulness or (2) that this

amnesia is self-inflicted since it could have been avoided through spiritual continuation (cf. Colossians 1:23; 2:6-8).

Regarding the “purification from former sins,” MacArthur writes:

Purification translates katharismos, from which the English catharsis (“cleansing”) derives. Such a believer’s sin makes him unable to be confident that he was cleansed and rescued from his former life (Eph. 2:4–7; 5:8, 26; Titus 3:5–6; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 1:7). He cannot be certain if he has been truly saved because he does not see an increase of virtue and usefulness in his life. Once blind before salvation, then made to see, these saints can experience a kind of spiritual blindness again. That kind of spiritual forgetfulness leads to the repeating of old sins, and it robs such Christians of their assurance. Assurance of salvation is directly related to present spiritual service and obedience, not merely to a past salvation event made dim in the disobedient believer’s memory.²²

Illustration: Another author illustrates this point:

In the ancient world one significant duty of a client toward his or her patron was the remembrance of past benefits received from the patron. People who do not grow in virtue are failing in that important duty. Here the benefaction being forgotten is that of cleansing from past sins.... This is a benefit that we should be grateful for, and out of this gratitude arises the desire to grow to be more like the one who cleansed us. If we neglect this growth and instead turn back to our former lives, then we have forgotten what was done for us and are, so the speak, slapping our divine patron in the face (cf. Paul’s expression of this idea in Rom 6:1–14; 1 Cor 6:9–11).²³

he ignores the instructions and skips the exercise sessions, he can expect to get a call (i.e., a convicted conscience) from the Trainer holding him accountable for his lack of performance. He will begin to see the Trainer as a nuisance to avoid rather than an insightful Coach who really knows what is best. Unfortunately, the relationship will disintegrate.

The Christian, however, who faithfully seeks to develop these essential virtues, will see every circumstance of life as a “fitness station” upon which the Trainer has arranged another repetition of the necessary surrender, dependence, and obedience required to develop and manifest that virtue. As the believer interacts with his Lord, taking instruction, asking for help, receiving encouragement and grace, and so forth, he will learn much about his Trainer. As the relationship develops, the believer will find the Trainer revealing more and more about Himself and His disposition toward and plans for His child.

²¹ “If those virtues are present in one’s life, then he has and enjoys this true knowledge” (MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 45). Also, “[Peter] also was saying that those who lack godly virtues and are not abounding with them give no indication that they are believers. Or, as Fuchs and Reymond say, there is no virtue without knowledge, but also there is no knowledge without ethics. The ineffectiveness and unfruitfulness relate to their knowledge (epignōsis) of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Schreiner, 303).

²² MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 43-44.

²³ Davids, 187.



Application: What does this “blindness” Peter speaks of look like? *Open discussion—some thoughts: (1) a complacency with or rebellion in his spiritual status, while ignorantly overlooking his real predicament; (2) a frequent sense of guilt and condemnation because of a failure to “reckon” the payment of Christ on the cross to be effectual; (3) a trite consideration of Christ and His work; (4) an obsession “with the present—the latest recording hits, the summer’s blockbuster movies, the fall’s television lineup, the current superstars and celebrity fashions, the hottest electronic games, and the season’s ball teams’ standings”²⁴; (5) a view of trials or temptations—tests—that focuses “only on the immediate situation and how he can get relief...[seeing only] the immediate pain or misery in the trial or the enticing pleasure of the temptation”²⁵*

Transition: Peter now draws to a conclusion (e.g., “therefore”) in verses 10-11 with a summary statement that we’ll consider under the heading “the benefits of faith’s production.”

THE BENEFITS OF FAITH’S PRODUCTION (vv. 10-11)

In verses 10-11, Peter suggests at least three benefits of faith’s production, the first of which we’ve already considered.

1. Confidence of salvation

He starts by again reiterating the diligence that believers must give to choosing the correct option of the two that we just considered—“Wherefore the rather [or more literally “all the more”], brethren, give diligence [same word as in verse 5]...” to practice these qualities (e.g., “if you do these things”).

This is a fitting bookend to this passage, for in light of everything Peter has written about faith’s production, believers should earnestly be “doers of the word” and “make

their calling and election sure.” To “make sure” is in the middle voice in the original language and should be translated “to make for yourselves,” “indicating believers are to assure themselves.”²⁶ The word “certain” has a legal connotation to it in Hebrews 9:17 and speaks of validity or confirmation. “Calling” (cf. 1:3) and “election” (cf. 1 Peter 1:1) were dealt with in lesson 1.²⁷ The way in which believers make their salvation “certain” is by “doing these things [i.e., the virtues of verses 5-7].”

Peter’s concern is that believers have confidence and assurance that they are included in the elect. God knows His elect (cf. 2 Tim. 1:9...), and His elect should enjoy the knowledge that they are His.²⁸

2. Climax of salvation

Two phrases emphasize this benefit from the pen of Peter.

First, “you shall never fail [lit. “stumble”]” (v. 10). Although this verb clearly refers to sin in James (2:10; 3:2), that is an unlikely meaning in Peter. Peter certainly doesn’t expect believers not to sin, and on the other hand he would be redundant and obvious if he simply meant that if one practiced virtue, he wouldn’t be sinning.

Thus, considering the context, it’s probably best to take it (1) more immediately as never falling “into doubt, despair, fear, or questioning”²⁹ (cf. James 1:6) or (2) more eschatologically as to “not forsake God, abandon Him, and commit apostasy (cf. Rom 11:11; Jude 24).”³⁰ The latter interpretation best fits with verse 11. This would be similar to what Peter wrote in his first letter: “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”

²⁶ MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 44.

²⁷ “Calling and choosing are inseparable realities indicating God’s effectual call of believers to salvation (Rom. 11:29; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Matt. 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30) based on His sovereign election of them in eternity past (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4, 11; Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 2:9)” (Ibid.).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The MacArthur Study Bible, 2 Pe 1:10–11.

³⁰ Schreiner, 305. This is the recommendation of BDAG.

²⁴ Berg, 8.

²⁵ Ibid., 9.

(1:5). Furthermore, the English rendering “never” translates three Greek words that combine to render this promise incredibly certain. Indeed, “Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling and to cause you to stand, rejoicing, without blemish before His glorious presence—to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for all eternity. Amen” (Jude 24, NET).

Those who do not stumble will “thusly” (i.e., “so” in the KJV) have “an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ richly granted to you” (literal rendering). What a wonderfully real, glorious, triumphant, and climactic assurance!³¹ However, it is with these final two phrases that Peter leaves an appropriate question mark over the eternal destiny of the professing believer who persists in a lifestyle devoid of the qualities of verses 5-7.³²

Application: Consider a personal application in light of these benefits—“you’re as godly as you chose to be.” None of us are as godly as we want to be, but we can be as godly as we chose and strive to be, because the nature of the saving faith that God has

³¹ “A rich heavenly reward in the future may also be implied (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 4:9; 12:28; 1 Peter 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 22:12)” (MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 45). Also, “The Greek word ministered in this verse is the same word translated “add” in verse 5. To those who “add”—generously supply—these essential virtues to their faith, God will “minister”—generously supply—a full and lavish welcome into His eternal presence upon death. He will most honor those who look most like His Son” (Berg, pp. 11-12). Thus, the progression in the passage is (1) God added to us a precious faith [vv. 1-4]; (2) we must “add” to our faith [vv. 5-7]; and (3) the result is that God will “add” to us an abundant entrance into His eternal kingdom. Our work is sandwiched by God’s work!

³² Berg, pp. 10-11:

You have probably walked out of a superstore or other retail shop only to have the alarm go off as you exited the building. An alert store clerk may have approached you and asked to see your receipt. He was asking you to produce something that would demonstrate you truly did own the goods you were saying were yours.

Peter is doing the same thing in this passage, saying in effect, “If you do not have these virtues growing and developing in you, and you have no motivation to cultivate them, then you better check to see if you, indeed, possess any saving faith upon which these are built.”

Many believers who show no evidence of growth in Christ still protest that they remember a time when they asked God to save them....The receipt that they possess salvation is the evidence of some measure of Christlikeness in their life. “Lack of spiritual growth is a sign of spiritual death.” If there is no desire to develop and no evidence of these virtues, there is no saving faith.... An eternal life... will sprout likeness to Christ in [the individual].

given us is that it will transform us as we cooperate with it. This is what John Piper refers to as “working the miracle” (cf. Philippians 1:12-13). You can be godly, gracious, patient, loving, self-controlled, kind, tender-hearted, sweet-spirited, etc. because the nature of the faith God gave you is to produce these qualities, and God’s operation within you will be unhindered as you work along with Him. So, go for it! Work on these qualities! Strive to practice verses 5-7! Do it with a mind teathered to God’s own production of your faith in verses 1-4, but do it nonetheless. God’s promised production, fruitfulness, confidence, and an incredible climax for those who do! To respond indifferently is worisome.



Consider also a corporate application at this point. How do the exhortations in Hebrews 3:12-4:1, 11-13 apply to the local assembly in light of both the confidence and question-mark we noted above? (1) *We must exhort one another daily to continue onward unto the climax of our salvation, lest we fall away; this is the God-ordained means of helping true believers press onward faithfully and of stirring up “profession-only” believers unto true faith in the gospel as they consider their true state;* (2) *Verses 11-13 remind us that God’s Word cannot be deceived and that it can convict the deceived hearts – let’s use this powerful tool to help us accurately evaluate our own standing and let’s give it one to another so that others can be convicted to continue by it.*

CONCLUSION

“Believers who abound in the qualities described in vv. 5-7 will never fall away from God. They are cultivating their relationship with Him daily. Those seduced by the false teachers reveal that the problem is a moral one. They have forsaken goodness, allowed their wills to be captivated by evil, and are now easy prey for deception.”³³ Friends, cooperate with God in the productivity of your faith. Yes, add to your faith!

³³ Schreiner, 305-06.

ESSENTIAL VIRTUES

	Loving God with My Whole Heart	Loving Neighbors as Myself	
	THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 5)	THE TRADEMARK OF CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 7)	
ESSENTIAL VIRTUES	<p>Saving FAITH</p> <p>Being a “partaker of the divine nature” through the righteousness of Jesus Christ</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Pursuing the EXCELLENCE of Christlikeness</p> <p>Cultivating a God-mandated purpose to develop and display the excellencies (character) of Jesus Christ</p> <p>↓</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-taught understanding of the person, the work, and the ways of Jesus Christ</p>	<p>SELF-CONTROL</p> <p>Cultivating a God-empowered mastery of my internal desires</p> <p>↓</p> <p>ENDURANCE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-sustained faithfulness under external pressure</p> <p>↓</p> <p>GODLINESS</p> <p>Cultivating a God-honoring devotion to Jesus Christ that promotes righteousness and opposes evil</p>	<p>BROTHERLY KINDNESS</p> <p>Cultivating a God-engendered affection for and service to those in the “household of faith”</p> <p>↓</p> <p>LOVE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-imitating mindset that scripturally and sacrificially meets the spiritual needs of others</p>
	CORE VALUES	<p>COMMITMENT to Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a wholehearted disciple who chooses the appeals and ideals of Christ and rejects the appeals and ideals of the world.</p>	<p>COURAGE for Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a bravehearted disciple who advances Christ and His ways and opposes evil in himself and others regardless of risk to himself.</p>