

It All Adds Up
2 Peter 1:3-11
August 13, 2017

This letter begins with the official signature from Peter. He identifies himself as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. By this point he is known as an evangelist, shepherd and pastor. He's writing to encourage and equip the people of God. His first letter was primarily intended to encourage the people of God to live faithfully despite the reality of suffering due to persecution and opposition. But in this letter, there's another theme that permeates throughout the letter, and that is false teaching. More than likely, Peter's in a Roman prison awaiting death under Nero, but in these closing moments of life, before he's killed, he is writing to Christians in hopes that they will remember what he taught them once he's gone.

Again, it's important to mention that these Christians are experiencing hell on earth. The notoriously violent and mean-spirited Nero is torturing Christians near and far, and this type of persecution is a threat to the Christian church. But, what's even worse, according to what Peter is writing – is the strife and problems that have surfaced within the Christian churches. False teachers and false doctrines are the major concern of Peter in this letter. So, over and over throughout his writings you see him constantly emphasizing doctrine. He has a special emphasis on the established teachings of Jesus. Peter presents these set of established teachings because he wants the best for the Church. These teachings are going to become the established doctrines of the Christian Church. Doctrines are known as the accepted teachings about Jesus, the faith, and how we live out that faith. Peter wants to encourage and equip these people with the correct and established teachings concerning Christ, because there are some people teaching bad doctrine and the people are getting confused.

I don't know where you are in the emotional rollercoaster ride that we all signed up for called life. But, what I do know is this... life is hard! At the time when Peter is writing this the daily anguish these believers were living through horrific. Can you imagine receiving the devastating news that your loved one, uncle, aunt, cousin, father, mother, child has been captured, tortured and killed at the colosseum? Here's the God-honest truth: suffering has a way of deterring one's focus and discouraging one's trust. Peter is trying to teach these Christians about the eternal truths that are meant to sustain them through times of suffering. He knows that his departure is near, it's only a matter of time before he is martyred for the faith – and he wants these believers to be comforted by the fact that they have been chosen by God.

Throughout his first letter, Peter is encouraging the people of God to remain faithful to God and to live with an effort towards godly morality despite the harsh reality of persecution and opposition. But now in this second letter, Peter expands the call to faithfulness; he's now encouraging the people to be on guard against false teachers and false doctrines. The false teachers with their false doctrines were striving to convince these Christians that they had something to offer them outside the Good News of Jesus Christ. They were creating tensions that were stirring up the Church and Peter is concerned that they have the potential to be worse than the outside persecution and opposition from the government and the culture. So, if you look carefully at what he's saying in verse 3, ***By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him...*** Peter is assuring the people of God that they have everything that they need because they "know" Christ.

This knowledge is not just head knowledge: meaning, that we can recite who Jesus is and what He accomplished. He's talking about a knowledge that goes far beyond head or intellectual knowledge. This knowledge, that Peter is referring to, is to be known by Christ and to know Him. It's when the head knowledge we have about Jesus takes the 18 inch drop to our hearts and it becomes a relationship, a deep – heart connection because of what he did for us. Because of Jesus, **We have been chosen to be in relationship with God.** One of the ways that we can be easily deceived is if we don't remember this essential truth. We have been chosen by God, to know Him, to be in a deep, loving and lasting relationship with a God who loves us. Because of that relationship, Peter says that we have EVERYTHING that we need. We are not lacking. What we already have is sufficient. This is good news to those who are experiencing depression, or low self-esteem, or guilt, or shame, and defeat from one's past – the Good News of Jesus Christ

says you are God's chosen and you have everything you need. Friends, one of the most beautiful truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is this – **we are complete in Him.**

I'm not suggesting we're perfect. If you are anything like me, I acknowledge every day that I fall short of God's perfect standard. Do I try? Yes! Do I fail? Yes! So, what do you do when you strive to live up to God's standard, and fall hopelessly short every single day? Sometimes I feel like our nature is to just accept our failures and instead of striving to do better every day, we just accept our failures and then we eventually embrace them. What do you do with desires, passions, lusts, etc. that you've had ever since you can remember? You run to Christ, the One who has the divine power, the One who gives us everything that we need to live godly. We have an answer, and it's Christ. Friends, we all have that something, that impedes our progress, hinders our godliness, stifles our ability to trust Christ etc. But Friends, Peter reminds us that God gave His only begotten Son as a living sacrifice, in order that His grace would cover us, and then empower us. And this is why I say – we are complete in Him.

We are completed in Christ! That is a wonderful truth; but, we must know that this does not mean that we are finished. Let me say it another way; giving your life to Christ is not a destination, it's a journey. You don't accept Christ – accept that He makes you complete in Him – and then stop there. When we come to Christ, that's the beginning of a beautiful relationship! You know what happens in a relationship? You change. Peter tells us how wonderful and glorious our change is, once we come to Christ. Look at verse 4 – ***And because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share His divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.*** If you ask me, this verse is incredible. Because of God's glorious promises, we have a way to escape the world's corruption that is caused by human desires. Wow! That is amazing! Think about it friends, the world that we live in is corrupt. The root of the problem is human desire. Human desires that are not centered on the truth of God's word – that are innately selfish and self-serving. Think about it:

- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Human exploitation
- Racism, classism, sexism

All of these social realities are evil and wrong – they all stem from ideologies that are rooted in a selfish culture. But the gospel transforms us from our selfish way and into people who want more of what God wants and less of what we want! In fact, the effectiveness of the gospel is evidenced by the transformation of our lives. Friends, here's the reality: the gospel changes us. **Jesus chooses us, then changes us.**

So, how do you take these truths and apply them practically to your life? How do I apply these principles this afternoon at the restaurant, Monday morning at work, at the gym through the week, Friday during my date night, and Saturday at the youth game?

Peter tells us how to live this transformation out in our lives. In verse 5 to ***make every effort to respond to God's promises.*** Wow! Make every effort? Wait, what? Think about the things in this life that we have given our greatest efforts to. If we are truthful, we give our full effort to a lot of things that are in this world. Things that are temporary. Things that fade away with time. We give every effort to things that depreciate. Things that are vain, here today and gone tomorrow. So, what does Peter mean when he says, "make every effort?" He gives us a list of virtues that, if applied, will equip every Christian to be godly, fruitful, and effective in the world for Jesus. Notice something before we get into these godly attributes: note that Peter begins this litany with faith, and ends it in love.

Sandwiched in between the virtues of faith and love, Peter says that we must make every effort to add the following virtues to our faith:

- Moral excellence
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Patient endurance

- Godliness
- Brotherly affection

These virtues enable us as believers to do as Warren Wiersbe insightfully states, when he addresses the power of God; he says that Jesus was **“able to make contact without being contaminated.”**

Jesus made contact with person after person: the man who had leprosy, the woman at the well, the sick and the lame, the blind and the outcasts. Jesus made contact, yes; but, he was not contaminated.

The same principle holds true for us today that are in the world, but not of the world: we must be able to make contact with the world, without being contaminated by the world. The virtues that Peter lifts in this passage equips us to do exactly that – be in the world, be and make the difference in the world, but not lose our Christian identity in the process.

Peter challenges these early Christians to prove that they are God’s chosen people. Prove it? Verses 10-11 are show up or shut up kind of words with a promise! In any other discipline, sport, job, career etc. you name it, we are comfortably with challenging people to prove that they love it, prove that they are the professional, prove that they are worthy, prove that you are the best – but when it comes to God and our faith, it’s like we get a pass. This, I believe, is the reason that we don’t have the type of impact that we want to see in the world. How can we impact the literacy rate amongst inner-city kids that struggle to eat every day, struggle because of the lack of school books, struggle because they don’t have the proper uniform to go to school? Or, how can we impact the heroin epidemic in the suburban high schools? Boys and girls are struggling with being bullied, depression, low self-esteem, sexual identity, and where is the church?

There are people who are hungry, without adequate clothes and shelter, meaningful employment, and socially ostracized – but where is the church? There are people who live their lives as inmates in the criminal justice system due to bad decisions that are born out of hopelessness and desperation but, where is the church? There are senior citizens who ae alone, millennial’s that speculate and build their own empires instead of joining the efforts of others, young people who want nothing to do with the church because of our commitment to programs instead of people, procedures instead of people, pews instead of people. Let me sum it up by saying this: ineffectiveness and fruitfulness is inactivity! But Friends, can we shift our attitudes and energies? Can we decide to get skin in the game, today? Peter was calling those Christians of that day, and now the Word of God is challenging us as Christians today, to prove that we are God’s chosen people. Prove it! Make a difference and be the difference in the world. What we do in this world matters, and **what we do in this world impacts eternity.** And friends, when we put our minds together to prove that we are, in fact, the chosen people of God – look what God does!

This is the best part, God calls us to hard work, to make every effort; but think about it, when do you ever give minimum effort and get maximum results? Or, when do you give maximum effort and get minimum results? Well, the authority of God and His word is telling us, in no uncertain terms, that when we make every effort to live in a way that is pleasing to God – that God will have a grand entrance for us to enter His Eternal Kingdom! Wow! The results are eternal. I think it’s too easy to forget the seriousness of the work we’re called to. The stakes are the highest they can be...so, will you give it your all?