

A Growing Conviction

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in 2 Peter 1.
- 2 Peter 1, and if we read again at verse 5, where Peter writes, For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.
- For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- And so on. You know, while many nations in our world are living in lockdown, and dealing with distancing, and coping with COVID-19, the United States have had other things to deal with.
- Because, as you know, and as we've witnessed over the last few days, there's been a lot of anger and aggression, which has arisen over the death of George Floyd, who was a black American who died while in police custody.
- [1 : 1 9] And since that awful tragedy, chaos, confusion, and even carnage has followed, with protests and riots taking place throughout the United States of America. But, you know, the whole world, we've also witnessed the brutish and bullish brutality of the American police force, especially as they were clearing protesters, so that the president could make a speech.
- And I'm sure you saw the speech, maybe even heard the speech. And you'll know that after President Trump's speech, after he made his speech, he walked across the road to St. John's Church for this photo opportunity, a photo opportunity of holding his Bible, a Bible which he claims to be his favourite book.
- But a few years ago, when Donald Trump was asked what his favourite verse in the Bible was, he said that he didn't want to go into it because it was personal and he didn't want to speak about specifics.
- And so then he was asked a more general question, which book of the Bible was his favourite? And he responded by saying, well, the whole Bible is such an incredible book that he couldn't possibly choose one.
- Now, of course, we don't know anyone's heart. But the Bible affirms that when you become a Christian, there's evidence of grace in your life.
- [2 : 4 2] There are marks of grace in your life. There's a growth in grace in your life. Because being a Christian is not just about owning a Bible. Being a Christian is about knowing the Bible and knowing the God of the Bible.
- Being a Christian is not just about professing Christ. It's also about possessing Christ. And as Jesus says, by your fruit you shall know them.
- By your fruit you shall know them. And as we said last week, that's what 2 Peter is all about. It's all about growing and bearing fruit.

Because as we said, the key verse in 2 Peter is the last verse of 2 Peter. Where Peter writes in 2 Peter 3, verse 18, He says, grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And as we saw last week, Peter reminded the Christian church that every Christian needs to be a growing Christian. Because every Christian has graciously received faith, the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ, the gift of knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the gift of effectual calling to Jesus Christ.

[4 : 0 0] My friend, as a Christian tonight, you've been saved by grace and you're to grow in grace because you're to be a growing Christian. And as we learned last week, a growing Christian will have a growing confidence, a growing comprehension, and a growing conviction.

And in these verses that we're looking at this evening, Peter expands upon what it means for a growing Christian to have a growing conviction. Because Peter says, if you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

If you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality. And there are two headings this evening, just two headings this evening, a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

So first of all, a Christian with quantity. Peter says in verse five, for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

Now we often ask the question, what's more important, quantity or quality? But for Peter, it's not either or, it's both and. Because as a Christian, Peter says you need both quantity and quality.

[5 : 3 9] And if you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll have, you'll have a Christian, you'll be a Christian with quantity. You'll be a Christian that displays and demonstrates the grace of God in your life.

But as a growing Christian, your growth in grace, it involves effort, it involves energy. And that's what Peter means when he says in verse five, he says, for this very reason, because you've been saved by grace, he says, and you've received the gift of faith, he says, you're to make every effort to supplement your faith.

Therefore, as a Christian, you're saved by grace, but you're saved for good works. You're not saved by good works, you're saved for good works. And Peter says, for this very reason, because you've been saved by grace, you're to supplement your faith, you're to complement your faith, you're to add to your faith.

Not that doing any of these things depends upon your salvation, or these things make your salvation better. Not at all. But they're to supplement your faith. They're to evidence your faith.

They're to be marks that show that you have the grace of God at work in your life. And they enable you, says Peter, they enable you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[7 : 0 5] And you know, what Peter is teaching us this evening is just what Paul taught the Philippians. Because when Paul taught the Philippians, he urged them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

But you know, Paul didn't say that we have to work for our salvation. He said that we're to work because of our salvation. He says that we're to use our energy and make every effort to work and to grow.

We're to work out our own salvation because God has graciously worked in. God has graciously worked faith. He's worked righteousness.

He's worked knowledge into our hearts. Therefore, we must work out our salvation. And this is what Peter is saying. We must supplement and complement and even evidence our salvation.

And you know, Peter makes this emphasis here so that we will see that we're not to be lazy learners or dozing disciples or slothful saints or careless Christians.

[8 : 12] No, Peter is reminding us here, we are saved by grace. We've been plucked as brands from the burning. We've been washed in the blood of the Lamb. We've received the righteousness of Christ.

We've been adopted into the family of God. We're heirs and joint heirs with Christ. We have the privilege of pleading the great and precious promises of God's word at his throne of grace.

And we have the assurance of grace by the way and glory in the end. My friend, we have received every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. Therefore, says Peter, for this reason, because you have received all this in response to the salvation that God has so graciously worked into your heart, Peter says, you must, you must make every effort to supplement your faith.

And with that, Peter then lists seven Christian qualities which we must possess and practice in our lives. He says in verse five, for this reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love.

And the thing is, we're to possess and practice all seven of these qualities, not just some of them or the ones we like or the ones we think that are easier to attain. No, Peter says, we're to strive and, strive to possess and practice all seven of these qualities because, as Peter says, you're to be a Christian with quantity.

[10 : 04] You're to be a Christian with quantity. But when we consider these seven Christian qualities, we're not to think of them as rungs of a ladder or steps in a staircase where we're climbing higher and higher to God.

Rather, we should consider these seven Christian qualities more like the colours of the rainbow. And, you know, we're familiar with the colours of the rainbow because we've, well, it's the symbol that's been adopted by supporting our key workers during this coronavirus.

But as you know, there are seven colours in the rainbow and together, these colours create this beautiful spectrum of light. And in a similar way, Peter says that if we possess and practice these seven Christian qualities, it'll confirm that the light of the gospel is at work in our life.

And so, Peter gives us seven Christian qualities. And the first Christian quality with which we're to supplement our faith is virtue or Christian conduct.

Which means that when we're saved by grace through faith, our Christian conduct is to change. Because if there's no change from our former way of life, then there's no evidence that grace is at work in our life.

[11 : 28] If we still conduct ourselves in the same manner as we did before and keep the same company and go to the same places and entertain the same sins, then there's no evidence that the light of the gospel is at work in our life.

Therefore, what Peter is emphasising to us is that we need to put off our former life. We need to put off our former way of conduct. We need to put it away from us and even put it to death.

And you know, this is something Peter repeatedly emphasised in his first letter. That we're to be holy in our conduct. We're to consider how we conduct ourselves.

We're to keep our conduct blameless and respectful and pure. My friend, we're to imitate and emulate our Lord in our Christian conduct.

Then the second quality with which we're to supplement our faith, Peter says, is knowledge or our Christian comprehension. Because when grace is at work, we will seek to redeem the time that we lost in our sin and we'll spend it learning about our Saviour.

[12 : 38] We'll want to grow in our Christian comprehension. We'll want to grow in our Christian comprehension of our sin, of our salvation and of our Saviour. And again, in his first letter, Peter said to the Christian church, which at the time was a relatively young church, you'll remember that Peter said, as newborn babies, desire the sincere or the spiritual milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

And you know, as you know, a baby can't grow just on milk. A baby has to progress onto meat. It has to progress onto solids.

A baby has to move on from milk and supplement their diet by eating meat and vegetables. Because it's by eating meat and veg that a baby will continue to grow and develop and become strong.

And in a similar way, the same is true in the Christian life. Because when we're born again, we start off on the spiritual milk. But as time goes by, we have to supplement our Christian diet with meat.

And we do that by reading more and praying more and studying more and having more fellowship. And it's also that we'll continue to grow in grace and develop as a disciple and become stronger as a saint.

[14 : 01] My friend, we need to supplement our faith by our Christian conduct, our Christian comprehension and our Christian control. That's the third quality which we're to possess and practice.

Self-control or Christian control. Because, you know, with all the circumstances and situations in our lives constantly changing, they're changing from one moment to the next.

You know, this is a Christian quality with which we must always strive to possess and practice in our lives. My friend, we need to be continually exercising Christian control over our senses.

whether it's with our eyes and what we look at or lust after, whether it's with our ears and what we listen to or long for, whether it's with our mouth and how we talk or what we taste, whether it's with our hands and what we touch or what we take.

Whatever temptation it is, we need to be continually checking ourselves and exercising Christian control over our senses. We need to have self-control.

[15 : 08] And we have to have self-control in order to prevent us falling into the sin of anger or adultery or alcohol or arrogance or even abuse.

We need to possess and practice Christian control over our heart and over our life. And so Peter says we need to supplement our faith by our Christian conduct, comprehension, control and commitment.

That's the fourth quality, a Christian, is to possess and practice. It's steadfastness or Christian commitment. And you know, our Christian commitment will be evidenced by our use of the means of grace.

And what I mean by the means of grace is the means by which we grow in grace. That's the means of grace. And it was J.C. Ryle who explained in his book, a brilliant book called Practical Religion, he said, when I speak of the means of grace, I have in my mind five principal things which we are to attend upon.

Reading the Bible, private prayer, public worship, the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day. These are the means, says Ryle, which God has graciously appointed in order to convey grace to our heart.

[16 : 30] As long as the world stands, he says, the state of our soul will always depend upon the manner and spirit in which we use the means of grace.

And so if you want to supplement your faith with Christian commitment, if you want to possess and practice steadfastness, then you must be in the means of grace.

You must read your Bible, be exercised in prayer, make the most of public worship, partake of the Lord's Supper and keep the Lord's Day. My friend, your Christian commitment will be evidenced by your use of the means of grace.

Then the fifth quality a Christian is to possess and practice is godliness or Christian character. Literally, the word godliness is godlikeness.

We're to imitate and emulate the character of God in our life. We're to be godly in our disposition, godly in our devotion, godly in our discussions, godly in our deliberations, godly in our decisions, godly in our dedication.

[17 : 39] We're to have a Christian character of godliness where we imitate and emulate the character of God in our lives. And so Peter says that we're to make every effort, we're to make every effort to supplement our faith with our Christian conduct, comprehension, control, commitment, character, and care.

Care. That's the sixth quality a Christian is to possess and practice. Brotherly affection or care. Christian care. And the Greek word that Peter uses here is the word Philadelphia.

Philadelphia. Philadelphia. And you know, I know it's probably silly to say it, but when I take Philadelphia cheese out of the fridge, I'm often reminded of this word, brotherly affection.

Because, and that's the brotherly affection that's to be seen and shown in the Christian church. Because as the church of Jesus Christ, we're to be seen and we're to be showing Christian care for one another.

In fact, the Bible often emphasizes the importance of the one another. Where we're to see one another and speak to one another and discuss with one another and be at peace with one another and agree with one another and bear one another's burdens and be kind to one another and encourage one another and build one another up and serve one another and care for one another and comfort one another and embrace one another.

[19 : 12] The Bible emphasizes to us the one another. But as you know, the one one another which Jesus teaches is that we're to love one another.

We're to love one another. Because was it not Jesus who said, love one another as I have loved you. By all this, people, by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

My friend, the evidence of our Christianity is when we possess and practice Christian care through our brotherly affection. But more than that, Peter says that we're to possess and practice Christian compassion.

Because the greatest of all Christian qualities is to love God. And what's interesting is that Peter used the Greek word Philadelphia to describe brotherly affection.

love for God. But here he uses the Greek word agape to describe love for God. And Peter knew all about the need for agape love.

[20 : 20] Because you'll remember that after Peter had denied Jesus three times, Jesus asked Peter three times, do you love me? Do you have agape love for me?

Do you have that Christian compassion which seeks to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and your neighbour as yourself?

And you know, Jesus is asking us the same question this evening. Do you love me? Do you have agape love for me? Have you supplemented your faith with Christian compassion?

Have you supplemented your faith with love? And so Peter, he's reminding us that we're to be a Christian with quantity. We're to make every effort to possess and practice these seven Christian qualities in our life because they're all marks of grace.

They're all evidence of the grace of God working and growing in our life. Therefore, we're to make every effort, says Peter, to supplement our faith by our Christian conduct, comprehension, control, commitment, character, care, and compassion.

[21 : 33] We're to possess and practice all seven of these qualities, not just some of them or the ones we like. We're to possess and practice all of them because as Peter says, if you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

If you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality. And that's what we see secondly, a Christian with quality.

Peter says in verse 8, for if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For whoever lacks these qualities is so near-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.

For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[22 : 48] Now, we said earlier that when we consider these seven Christian qualities that we're to possess and practice, we're to think of them like the seven colours of the rainbow.

Because together, each colour of the rainbow creates this beautiful spectrum of light. And so we are to possess and practice these seven Christian qualities in order to confirm to us and to others that the light of the gospel is at work in our heart.

And that's why Peter says in verse 8, he says, for if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter says that if we're striving and seeking to make every effort to supplement our faith by our Christian conduct, comprehension, control, commitment, character, care and compassion, then he says if we're doing these things, then these things will keep us from being unfruitful and unfaithful.

They'll keep us from being idle, ineffective and inactive. We'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

[24 : 01] But, says Peter in verse 9, he says, whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Now notice that Peter doesn't say that the person who lacks these qualities isn't a Christian. Rather he says that this Christian is so short-sighted and so self-obsessed that they fail to see the importance of their Christianity.

In fact, Peter says that they've forgotten that God has graciously worked in their life and cleansed their heart from sins. They have faith, says Peter, but they're not supplementing their faith.

They're not supplementing their faith by their Christian conduct, their Christian comprehension, control, commitment, character, care or compassion. Peter says this type of Christian is unfaithful and unfruitful.

They're idle and ineffective and inactive. And Peter emphasizes that's not what a Christian is meant to be. That's not what a Christian is meant to be.

[25 : 15] Therefore, says Peter in verse 10, he says brothers and sisters, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.

For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. But you know, how can we make our calling and election sure?

Especially because our effectual calling and our election, as we know, it's all of grace. You know, we often think of election as negative and people often use it as an excuse for not coming to Christ.

but the Bible teaches us that election is good news. Election is good news because, you know, if it were not for the Lord's electing grace and effectually calling us to himself, no one would be saved.

No one would receive entrance into the eternal kingdom of God. But the question we often have is, well, if salvation is all of grace, if election and our effectual calling is all of grace, how are we to make our calling and our election sure?

[26 : 25] How are we to have assurance of our calling and our election? And that's what this word sure means. It refers to our Christian assurance.

In fact, it carries with it the image of a ship's anchor fastened to a rock. It's the same word that's used in Hebrews 6 to affirm that our hope is the anchor of our soul because it's sure and steadfast.

And as the hymn writer reminds us, we have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

And so we're to make our calling and our election sure. But, you know, people, they often talk about lacking assurance or needing assurance of their salvation and it causes a lot of turmoil for people.

But, you know, here Peter gives to us the cure for that concern. Peter gives to us the cure to our concern when he urges us to make our calling and our election sure.

[27 : 35] because Peter says that the only way that we can be sure and steadfast about our salvation, the only way we can have Christian assurance, is by making every effort to supplement our faith.

You know, we often consider verse 10 and the statement of verse 10 to make your calling and election sure. We often consider it in isolation. but we should always read every verse within its context because what Peter is saying here in context is that if you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

If you're diligent, if you make every effort, if you eagerly, zealously strive to supplement your faith with this rainbow of Christian qualities, these Christian qualities of conduct, comprehension, control, commitment, character, care and compassion, Peter says it's by doing these things that you'll be sure and have assurance of your calling and your election.

My friend, it's by diligently making every effort to possess and practice these qualities in your life that you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Christ. And what Peter is saying here is that that growth will be shown to and seen by others. There will be evident marks that grace is at work in your life.

[29 : 13] And you know, this is actually what we were emphasising last week, that in order to grow upwards, we must first of all grow downwards because we need to be rooted and grounded in the good soil of God's word.

we need to supplement our faith and that requires effort. It takes time. It involves commitment. It involves diligence.

Because if we don't make every effort to supplement our faith, then what Peter is saying is that we'll be a Christian that is unrecognisable.

My friend, if we don't make every effort to supplement our faith, we will be unrecognisable as a Christian.

We'll be like a garden that is overgrown with weeds and wildflowers. And you know, to tell you the truth, I'm not much of a gardener.

[30 : 13] And in the past, I've had very little success when planting anything. As many of you know, we will have been in Barvis for six years next month.

And in that time, I've planted potatoes once and it was a disaster. My excuse is that the kids were young and I didn't have time. But the truth was I wasn't committed to them.

Because I had spent time preparing the ground and I found time to plant the potatoes. But because I didn't have time and didn't have commitment to the potatoes, I neglected them.

And I neglected the potatoes for so long that when I eventually came back to them, they were so overgrown with weeds and grass that I couldn't really find them.

And you know, if you were to go out behind the manse today to the plot of ground that I planted potatoes on, if you were to go there today, you'd never know that I had been there.

[31 : 11] You'd never think that I had worked that ground. because it's all overgrown and it looks like nothing had ever been there. And you know, that's what Peter is saying.

He says that's what happens when a Christian who doesn't make every effort to supplement their faith. He says that's what happens to a Christian who doesn't seek and strive to possess and practice these Christian qualities.

That's what happens to a Christian who isn't diligent in making their calling and their election sure. The result is, he says, that you become unrecognisable as a Christian and you just blend in with the world.

You become unrecognisable as a Christian and you just blend in with the world. You know, my friend, Adam was told in the Garden of Eden that it would be by the sweat of his brow that he would bring forth fruit.

And the same is true for a Christian. Because growth takes time. It needs effort. It requires energy. It involves commitment and diligence.

[32 : 21] Therefore, what Peter is saying to us this evening is that if you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality.

If you're a growing Christian with a growing conviction, then you'll be a Christian with quantity and a Christian with quality. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the wonderful gift of salvation. That the Lord, a God who has so worked in our lives in sowing that seed and bringing that seed onto fruition.

salvation. But Lord, we pray that we would nurture it. We would nurture our faith and we would add to our faith and supplement and complement our faith in the way that we live our lives and the way that we seek to bring glory to thy name.

We confess, O Lord, how far short we fall and how much of a mess and mistakes that we make. But Lord, we give thanks that thou art a God who is so gracious and so merciful.

[33 : 34] Bless us then, we pray. Help us, Lord, to strive and to seek to add to our faith all these Christian qualities that we've considered this evening.

That we might do so in order to bring glory to thy name. Keep us then, we pray. Bless us in the week that lies ahead. A week that is unknown to any of us, but known only to thee.

Keep us in the hollow of thine own hand and go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 89.

That's Psalm 89 in the Scottish Psalter and we're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked five. Psalm 89 is a psalm which praises God for his mercy and his faithfulness.

And we have every reason, even as we were considering this evening, every reason to praise God for his mercy and his faithfulness towards us. Psalm 89 from the beginning.

[34 : 35] God's mercy is I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all. For mercy shall be built, said I, forever to endure thy faithfulness even in the heavens thou wilt establish sure.

We'll sing on down to the verse marked five of Psalm 89 to God's praise. God's mercy is I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all.

for mercy shall be built, said I, forever to endure.

Thy faithfulness be in the heavens thou wilt establish sure.

I with my chosen one have made a calm and gracious thee, and to my servant, to my love, to the heavens for my life.

[36 : 24] That I thy seed is salvaged shall forever to remain, and will to generations all.

Thy throne will build and maintain. The praises of thy wonders, Lord, the heavens shall express.

And in the congregation all saints thy faithfulness.

And in the man who love you shall proclaim for the together.

Than there is a degree measure of intensity and the firm out.