

20221106 2 Peter 1:5-15 OUR HOPE THROUGH DILIGENCE

Biblical competence is important. One of the things I admire about Pastor Faber is his dedication to teaching the Bible so that this congregation will learn and experience biblical competence. What does biblical competence mean? When we study the Bible and work to bring what happened *then and there*, into the present *here and now*, we need to know and understand at least four things about the writing we are working on: 1) when it was written; 2) why it was written; 3) where it was written; and 4) to whom it was written.

That is a large part of biblical competence. Those four things will place the scripture into context so that we can understand what was going on at its initial writing, and then understand how to apply that scripture to our own lives today. Without application, scripture is just interesting reading, or even just an historical writing. Practical application of God's Word in a scripturally correct way is brought about through biblical competence. Biblical competence then protects us against false teachings, the very concerns Peter wrote about.

Peter wrote his second letter while he was in Rome, toward the end of his life. Since Peter was killed in Rome during the reign of Nero, an insane megalomaniac persecuting Christians by the hundreds, Peter's death would have taken place prior to A.D. 68. Peter probably wrote his second letter between A.D. 65 and 68. External historical records help us place that date with a high degree of accuracy.

Peter was deeply concerned that false teachers were beginning to infiltrate the churches. He called on Christians to grow and become strong in their faith so that they could detect and combat the spreading false teachings that were already taking place in the Christian culture. That false teaching, or defection from the truth, is called apostasy. Peter was a very strong advocate for the authenticity and accuracy of the Word of God and the ultimate return of the Lord Jesus. He had experienced Christ in person and knew what he was talking about.

1st Peter was written to believers who had been scattered throughout the world and were under intense persecution. Peter understood persecution; he had been beaten, threatened, punished, and jailed for preaching the Word of God. In Rome he was subject to arrest on sight. He knew what it was to endure hardship without harboring personal resentment, and without losing hope. Peter's experiential knowledge of the living hope in Jesus was the message of the book, and the example of Christ was the one to follow. Peter's hope was gained through his diligence in doing that, just as ours is.

On Wednesday evening, Pastor Faber prepared the introduction of this book. As a refresher, Peter introduced himself at the beginning of the letter as "a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ," and he addressed the letter "to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" (2 Peter 1:1). We find later in the book that Peter was writing to the same group of believers who had received his first letter. Keep in mind that 1st Peter was probably written about 3 to 5 years before 2nd Peter. The issue of false teachings and straying from the true gospel was an ongoing issue in the ancient church, just as it is today.

After the introduction of the book and this chapter, we see that there are basically three recurring themes of this book: warnings, reminders, and promises. As Peter has set the stage for who he is, who we are in Christ, and what our ultimate destiny will be in Heaven, we can now look at the three themes. Our warning is about our escape from the influences of the World.

Our reminders come about through today's BIG IDEA: Our foundation is faith; and added to our faith is virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Transitioning from verse 4, Peter says this, **"...having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."** And now, getting into verses 5-7, **"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."**

Our foundation is faith. The seven things we supplement, or add to, that faith in order to give us completeness are described in those verses. The first is **virtue**; said another way, moral excellence. We do what is right by having an inner discipline to do what is right. In my years in the Army I developed a moral code that said, "To know what is right, and to fail to do that which is right, is the worst form of cowardice." As a combat arms leader, I could not be a coward. We Christians cannot be moral cowards either, as we live a life for Christ. We know what is right, and therefore, we must always be ready to do that which is right. We do that through diligence, or fortitude. Our hope is reinforced in our diligence. We are diligent in exhibiting virtue.

The next thing we add to our faith is **knowledge**; both practical knowledge and experiential knowledge. We add practical knowledge by reading our Bible, studying the works of Bible teachers, and contemplating or thinking about what is said. We then

experience the reality of that knowledge. As Pastor Faber said on Wednesday, the “knowledge” that Peter is talking about is not just learning that God is good, but it is your experiencing that God is good. It is more than *head-knowledge*; it is *heart-knowledge*. We must never stop learning and studying the Word of God; and we must never stop living and experiencing the Word of God, as well.

To our faith we also add **self-control**. As believers, we don’t allow the world to control us; not through money, sex, power, food, drink, drugs, habits, work, or whatever it may be from the world. Self-control is the basis of discipline. We set our minds on what is right, and through self-control, we do that which is right. So much of the world’s influence on us is fun; and frankly some of the world’s influence is good. Clean entertainment is good. A good, clean novel is nice to read. It is okay to enjoy a good steak, cooked medium rare. But self-control means that none of those things, whether good or not, are to be ahead of our relationship with God through our faith. We control how we relate to those things, even good things, through our experiential knowledge of Christ.

We also need **steadfastness**. What is that? It means perseverance and sticking through to the end of the course. Perseverance also requires that we remain clear-headed and stable in our thinking. We cannot give in to the temptations to follow those who would tickle our ears with fine-sounding rhetoric that strays from the true word of God. We cannot find ourselves jumping from person to person, place to place, and idea to idea. We set our course with Christ and His teachings, and we remain true to the course.

Godliness is added to our faith, as well. **Godliness** is an authentic understanding of who God is, and our relationship to Him. In godliness, we understand that God is our creator, and we are the created; we are subservient and in submission to Him, and only Him. This gives us a right, or correct, perspective of who we are in relation to God; and, also important, it gives us a right perspective of who we are in relation to others. When we reflect that God loves the dirty-mouthed, boisterous, conniving thief as much as He loves us, we can begin to understand what God expects our relationship to others to be. Jesus died for them just as He died for me; for you, and all of us. A short way of saying this is that we don’t use people as tools, and we don’t belittle people who have a fallen lifestyle. And, that is hard to do.

That leads us, though, to **brotherly kindness**, which we also add to our faith. Brotherly kindness gives us those close relationships with other believers that are such a comfort to the community of believers. It allows us to share the burdens of other believers, and to have them share our burdens, and help us in our times of need. Brotherly kindness

also gives us room to allow for opinions that may be different than our own. Keep in mind that there is a difference between opinions and principles. Principles, for example, are our basic tenets that we hold true from the Word of God, such as the divinity of Christ; His sinless life; His resurrection; and our future with Him. Opinions may be on which worship songs we like, what order of service we use, how we dress for church; or whether we have drums in the praise band. Know the difference between principles and opinions, and allow others to have opinions, so long as they do not detract from the truth of the gospel of Christ. Opinions may or may not be the work of false teachers. False principles, on the other hand, are very much the work of false teachers, and of Satan.

And finally, we add **love**, and that is probably the hardest to consistently model as we add love to our faith. Jesus is the source of that love. As Jesus, the Son of God, He gave everything He had for us; to save us. The love of Jesus is unconditional and complete. In looking at love from a biblical perspective, we must also deal with our love for one another. Keep in mind that love and like are not synonymous. God loves the unloveable people of the world just as much as He loves me — and you. He loves them in a way only God can love them: unconditionally and without reservation.

In adding love to our faith, God expects us to give of our time, our resources, our patience, and our energy to see that each person we encounter comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and not just wring our hands and wish for it. **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”** (Matthew 22:37–40).

2 Peter 1, continues with verses 8-10. **“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 nearsighted 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.”**

God provides the power for all those seven attributes that are covered above. He does that so that we will be useful and fruitful. People in all walks of life generally want two things: 1) to matter to others – be significant; and 2) to have a purpose in life; to contribute. We see all manner of efforts to do those two things, some good and some very bad. Gangs form for the purpose of giving their members significance and purpose.

Civic clubs form for the purpose of giving their members significance and purpose. The dichotomy could not be more clear. But, with God providing the power, we can know how to be significant and have a purpose within the Kingdom of God. That will make us useful and fruitful.

If we as believers lack those seven qualities that we are to add to our faith, Peter says we are as good as blind, forgetting that we have been cleansed of our sins through our justification in Christ. We lose sight of what matters and start to focus on the glitz and glitter of the world. Therefore, we must be diligent. Evidence of, or our bearing witness to, our hope is in our diligence. That diligence confirms our calling as Christians, and in practice, or application, we will never fall out of grace.

2 Peter 1:11: "For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

As I said earlier, there are three themes to 2nd Peter: warnings, reminders, and promises. We've seen the warnings and heard the reminders of how we are to act and what we are to do. So, what are the promises? The promises are many, but include: the forgiveness of our sins, spiritual adoption by the Father, spiritual strength through the Holy Spirit, comfort in the midst of our suffering and hardships, provision for our needs, hope of Heaven when we die, bodily resurrection at the end-times, and our eternal reign with our Lord Jesus. And as we count our many blessings each day, we can come up with more and more promises.

Finally, in this section, Peter says, in verses 12-15, **"Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things."**

It is easy to see that as Christians in the 21st century, we are nearer to our Lord's return than the first-century Christians were that Peter was writing to. While we don't know the exact time of His return, we know it is 2,000 years closer than it was. Through television, social media, and other mass communications, Christians of our age must also be made aware that there are many false teachers holding themselves out as true Christian leaders. Too many believers who lack biblical competence have been taken in by false interpretations of Scripture. All of us as believers must be so grounded in the Word that we will be able to discern truth from error.

Peter wrote to remind first century Christians and he wanted his thoughts to be preserved as a continuing reminder. Those same thoughts and writings remind us 21st century Christians of what we must do and what we need to add to our faith in order to thrive in a harsh world.

That gets us back to the **BIG IDEA: Our foundation is faith; and added to our faith is virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.**

What Peter said *then and there*, has direct application to the *here and now*. It all applies to our lives and assures us of our rich reward into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The foundation for our faith is and always will be the same Word of God that Peter preached. We must be diligent.

And, it all points to Christ.

Let us pray.

Judge Albert "Buddy McCaig" is a regular guest speaker at the Grove. Buddy, a native of Hempstead, Texas, is an expository Bible teacher. He has known Pastor Faber McMullen for a couple of decades and they enjoy serving the Lord in harness with one another. Union Grove Baptist Church of Whitehall is one of the oldest Baptist congregations in the State of Texas. All gifts to the ministry are tax-deductible.