

OpenTheo

2 Peter 1:1 - 1:15



2 Peter - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg examines the biblical teachings of 2 Peter 1:1-15. He emphasizes that obtaining knowledge of God is essential for Christians, using the Greek word *epigenosko* to mean thorough knowledge. Gregg further emphasizes that faith is a gift from God and that one must grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord to fulfill Christian duties and live a godly life. Gregg also touches on the corruption of the fallen world and how one must follow the commands of the Lord to rise above it.

Transcript

Let's look at 2 Peter now, chapter 1. And this is a scary thing to try to cover 2 Peter in so few sessions as we have because in the past when I've covered 2 Peter, it takes a session per verse for the opening. The opening section takes hours for me to do what I want to do with it. And yet I pretty much have to take close to a whole chapter per session which is going to require obviously a lighter treatment than I would prefer.

Like 1 Peter, the opening verses are full of theological truth packed into a tight package of a few verses. Let's read the first four. Now you can see that's a very long run-on sentence.

And one thing you may notice as you read it is the frequent reference or the prominence given to the subject of knowledge. As I said in our introduction to 2 Peter, one of the arguments against Peter being the writer is that it does emphasize knowledge to such a great extent which was a very central emphasis of later Gnostic thinking. But just because later Gnostics talked about knowledge in their own way, that doesn't mean that Christians were not allowed to talk about knowledge.

Certainly knowledge of God is a major theme of the Old and the New Testaments. So the complaint is not a very valid one. But we do see reference to knowledge a great deal.

Now knowledge in the Greek can be *ginosko* or it can be *epigenosko*. And Peter uses *epigenosko* here, which means thorough knowledge. A thorough knowledge.

Ginosko simply means knowing something. *Epigenosko* means being thoroughly

acquainted with it. It may in some settings refer to an experiential knowledge rather than a head knowledge.

In any case, epiginosko means a very thorough knowledge of something. Complete knowledge. Full knowledge.

And so Peter uses that. He identifies himself, Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. At the very least, if this is not Peter writing, it's somebody who's a liar.

And so either the book is absolutely worthless as the work of a fraud or else it's an apostolic work. We considered the arguments against it, and I conclude that it is authentic. I certainly accept it as Simon Peter, a servant and apostle, as the true writer.

He says, this is to those who have obtained like precious faith with us. Now, you know, his fellow Christians. Now it's interesting because he doesn't say what geographical area he's writing to.

And in most of the epistles, most of the epistles are addressed to the church or the saints in and then some town or towns are named. However, if you look at 2 Peter 3.1, Peter says, Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle. Which, you know, our intuitions would suggest the first epistle was probably 1 Peter.

Unless there's some additional epistles of Peter that have been lost, and he had written an earlier one that isn't 1 Peter to this particular group. But in all likelihood, the church preserved all the epistles of Peter that were written. We can't be sure of it, but that's probably a default assumption in the absence of information to the contrary.

And that being so, this is his second epistle to the same people. Now we do know that 1 Peter was written to certain geographical regions. In 1 Peter 1.1, he says to the pilgrims of the Diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Now these are not cities, but provinces, Roman provinces. And Galatia, for example, and Asia were provinces where Paul did a great deal of ministry, where he had actually planted the churches there. So, at least in part, Peter wrote his first epistle to some of the churches that Paul had planted.

And it's thought that he may have written both epistles after Paul had died, which is why he had perhaps taken those churches under his wing to give some oversight and counsel to. In any case, he doesn't say in 2 Peter 1 where his readers are, but what they are. They are probably the same location as the readers of the first epistle, though.

What they are is those who have obtained like precious faith with us. Now, they've received faith. This actually is a pretty good verse for Calvinists, because Calvinists would argue that faith is a gift of God.

Calvinists would say that God has unconditionally elected certain people to be saved, and those people that he has elected he has given faith to, and repentance. And that without having been given faith and repentance by God, a person would have no hope of ever having faith or repentance. And therefore, that these Christians are those who have received faith like a gift.

There certainly are places in the Bible where it appears that Paul, for example, says that faith is a gift, that God has given to every man a measure of faith. Paul says that you have been granted not only to believe, but also to suffer with Christ. So, you've been granted by God the privilege of believing.

That faith is something that we have obtained, as Peter uses the term, or received, or been granted by God, is clearly a biblical teaching. Now, does this have to be understood precisely in the Calvinist way with the background of the Calvinist assumptions? It can be, but it needn't necessarily be, because even those who don't believe in strictly the unilateral election of unconditionally electing certain people to be saved and giving them faith and repentance, which by implication means that God has chosen not to give faith and repentance to the ones who don't have it. In other words, it's not them that decides Him.

That's, of course, what Calvinism teaches, which raises questions as to why, then, does He hold the other people responsible for not having faith, since they can't, and He doesn't choose to give it to them when He could. This is one of the objections that's raised to the Calvinist paradigm. And, of course, we don't have time to do thorough critiques of the different options here, but suffice it to say that even a non-Calvinist would argue that it is a great privilege to be given the opportunity to believe in Christ.

There are people who have never heard of Christ to this day. By the providence of God, we have been born in places where the gospel has been preached. We have Bibles.

We know about Jesus. Some don't. That's a great gift of God.

Our faith in Christ is something we have received through the graciousness of God. It needn't be understood that God took faith as a package and just stuck it in people. He may have, but that's not necessary to assume from these words, that God has given us the privilege of having the ability to believe is simply due to the fact that we've heard the word.

Paul said in Romans 10, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Not everyone has heard the word of God, and therefore not everyone has faith. We have been privileged in ways that not everybody has.

And we have obtained that precious faith with Peter and the other Christians in the world. He says, those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness

of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, I can't go into much detail as to what he means by we've obtained faith by the righteousness of God.

As if God owed it to us. Like God is righteous and therefore he's given you faith. Like he owed it to you.

But God doesn't owe anything to anybody. How is the fact that we have faith a result of God's righteousness? Some believe that he's referring to the fact that God's justice is impartial. That the Gentiles have been able to have the privilege of faith as well as the Jews.

God's not partial. Righteousness means justice. And therefore, because of God's character being just, that is, he's not just going to give opportunities to one race of people and exclude others.

That wouldn't be really just if all people have the equal need and no one deserves any more than anyone else. That by extending the gospel to the Gentiles, who his readers no doubt are primarily, God is extending his impartiality, his impartial justice. That they could believe too, not just the Jews, but Gentiles as well.

The language of this statement, the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, strongly suggests that he's saying that Jesus is our God and Savior. It's a strong affirmation of the deity of Christ. Now I think some modern translations that want to water this down a bit, depart a bit from the Greek and say the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Make it a distinction. But actually in the Greek it does say our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. And not only here, but Paul uses the same expression one time in the book of Titus.

In a well-known verse, Titus 2.13, where he says, looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing, or in the Greek, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The same expression. Our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Paul says that in Titus 2.13. Peter has this expression here. These are two very good texts showing that the early Christians believed that Jesus is God. And then he says in verse 2, grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Now it's interesting, like I said when we were talking about 1 Peter, that while Paul opens his epistles by wishing grace and peace to his readers, so does Peter. But Peter talks about grace and peace being multiplied. Not only in 2 Peter, but in 1 Peter.

In 1 Peter 1.2, the verse ends, grace to you and peace be multiplied. As if grace and peace are something you can have in measure, greater or lesser measure. The amount that you have can be multiplied or increased.

In fact, the last verse of 2 Peter, 2 Peter 3.18, says, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So grow in grace. Grace be multiplied to you.

Now, if we're thinking of grace primarily as simply God's amnesty, you know, we're criminals, worthy of judgment, and God grants us amnesty. He absolves us. He justifies.

He acquits us. And that is often how we think of grace only, I mean exclusively. It means I don't deserve to be saved, but I'm saved.

It means I'm a criminal, but God has called me righteous, and therefore I'm saved. I get to go to heaven, because even though I don't deserve it, God's grace gives me a ticket to heaven. That is true.

That is a true biblical teaching. Unfortunately, Christians often don't know of any other more extended concepts of grace that the Bible also uses. In addition to God's grace being His kindness and mercy and generosity toward us, it is also His endowment of His own nature, which makes us gracious also, and gives us grace to help in time of need, as the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 4.16. Or as God said to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, when Paul said, Please take this thorn from my flesh, Jesus, my grace is sufficient for you.

In 2 Corinthians, I think it's chapter 8, Paul says, God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you might have all sufficiency in all things. God's grace is sufficient. God can make all grace abound to you so that you'll have the sufficiency for whatever, including trials, including fulfilling Christian duties, living the Christian life.

We do that by grace. Actually, that verse I just mentioned is 2 Corinthians 9.8. God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you might have all sufficiency in all things. Peter says, May grace be multiplied to you.

May you have more of that. You know, look over at 1 Corinthians 15, just briefly. I could give a whole Bible study about grace, and it's tempting to do so, but obviously, that's why it takes so long for me usually to get through the first four verses of 2 Peter.

I can't do that today, but at least this will illustrate what I'm saying. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is actually contrasting his ministry with that of the other apostles, basically comparing himself favorably against them in terms of what's been accomplished. He's done more than they have.

Sounds like a boast, but he gives a disclaimer. He says in verse 10, 1 Corinthians 15, But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all. In the context, he's talking about the other apostles.

I've done more work than they have, but in case you think I'm boasting, I need to

backtrack here a little bit. Yet, not I, but the grace of God that was with me. I've accomplished more than they have.

I have labored more diligently and done more than they have, but it wasn't me. It was the grace of God working through me, enabling me. I've been enabled by the grace of God.

We won't turn there, but in chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians, in verse 10, Paul says, I, according to the grace of God given to me as a wise master builder, laid the foundation of the church. He always says it's the grace of God working in him. The Christian life is lived through the enablement of God.

It's a supernatural life. It's not just we join a club, a Jesus fan club, and try to do the things he says in our own power. You have to be born again.

You have to have the divine nature, as Peter's going to say in verse 4 here. You receive a new life when you're born again, and the enabling grace of God, not just the forgiving grace, but the enabling grace of God is needed to live the life. If we were only needing to go to heaven, then the forgiving grace of God would be all we need.

But God doesn't just call us to go to heaven even though we remain unimproved. He wants us to improve. He gives us the grace to do that.

He gives us the grace to walk like Jesus walked. Now, he says grace and peace be multiplied. Obviously, you can have more or less peace.

There are people more or less nervous, anxious, disturbed, and yet there are people who have great peace, and some have not such great peace, but some. Peace and grace are both Christian qualities that are given to us by God, and which Peter, in both of his epistles, he begins by saying, may these things be multiplied to you. Paul wishes grace and peace on his readers when he opens his epistles, but he doesn't mention multiplied.

He just says, may grace and peace be to you. Peter is seeing these things as something you need more of, continually more of. May grace and peace be given to you in abundance, more and more.

He says in verse 2, in the knowledge, epigonosko, of God and of Jesus our Lord. Interestingly, in verse 2, he identifies Jesus as God and Savior. And in verse 2, he distinguishes between God and Jesus.

But this is typical of the Bible in general. Jesus is God, and Jesus is different than God. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

This is a mystery. It's the Trinity mystery. The incarnation and the deity of Christ has to be understood as something that transcends our ability to grasp everything.

But as much as we want to analyze it, nail it down, and explain it, and put it into neat categories, we have to just live with the fact the apostles had a view of the deity of Christ that meant, in a sense, he is God. In a sense, he's separate from God. He's not the Father, but in a sense, he is the Father.

His name should be called Everlasting Father, it says in Isaiah 9.6 or 7. So, the deity of Christ is clearly affirmed. And even Jesus affirmed his deity in the same chapter that he affirmed that the Father is greater than I, in John 14. He said the Father is greater than I, but he said, but if you've seen me, you've seen the Father, and the Father is in me, and I'm in the Father.

This is all very mysterious. I won't go into trying to unravel it. I won't try to unscrew the inscrutable.

I'll just try to point out that the biblical writers were very comfortable with both statements. In rapid succession, he makes both statements. Jesus is God.

And then there's God and Jesus. Well, how do you sort that out? They don't. They don't ever bother to sort it out.

That's the thing about the New Testament. It affirms, but it doesn't expound on this particular thing. It's something that's mysterious and just accepted by faith.

It's something God understands better than we do. We may not understand it completely, but we certainly are required to affirm it. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding, the Proverbs said.

Now, verse 3. As his divine power, which we no doubt associate with the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said in Acts 1.8, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And in Luke 24, he said, wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high. He means the Holy Spirit.

God's divine power, it says, has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. We have all things that pertain to life. This probably means eternal life, although it could mean natural life.

It could be two categories, spiritual benefits and physical. You know, all things we need for life, that is for natural life, and for spiritual life are godliness. God has provided both.

Or it may be that he's thinking of spiritual life as a phenomenon, and godliness as the quality of it. Not entirely clear, but one thing he's saying for sure is that God has given us all we need. It's like what Paul said, that you may have all sufficiency in all things.

So there's really nothing that we need that can't be had through the divine power given to us. Through the knowledge, there's that knowledge in the Epigonosko again, of him

who called us by glory and virtue. Virtue, according to some of the Greek writers, the word that is used here, is the sum of all desirable character qualities.

And so God is the sum of all good character qualities. And later in verse 5, he's going to say that we have to add to our faith virtue also. That which is in God has to be added to us too.

The divine nature is going to be added to us. Although it's going to be like separate bricks in a wall, one after another. Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and so forth.

We're going to see that starting at verse 5, but we're not there yet. But God is full of virtue and glory, and through that virtue and glory he has called us to be Christians. But there's more.

Verse 4. By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises. Now, great and precious promises. What promises? Well, lots of promises of course.

But we know that Jesus has promised eternal life to those who are his people. He's promised the Holy Spirit. He's promised an eternal inheritance.

And Hebrews chapter 8 verse 6 says the new covenant is built on better promises than the old covenant. Which includes having the law written in your heart. And not requiring a priesthood to teach you about God, but knowing him yourself.

These are the kinds of promises. The great and precious promises that belong to the Christian that God has given us. So that through these, he says, you may be partakers of the divine nature.

Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Now, the divine nature. As I said, it's a mysterious phrase.

Even in the Greek it's not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It's a term that many Bible scholars say this sounds like it's written by an Gnostic or some Esotericist. You know, in a later century than Peter.

But there's no reason to assume that. It is a strange expression. It's God's own nature.

We have been partakers of it. That certainly is not contrary to the general teaching of Scripture. Even if the terminology is different.

God gives us his spirit. He's giving us himself. God dwells in us.

Christ dwells in us, Paul says. It's God's life that is imparted to us. When Jesus says, whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

What life is that? That's God's life. That's divine life. You know, it says in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 16 that God alone possesses immortality.

You ever notice that verse? 1 Timothy 6, 16. It says that God, or he may be referring to Christ. Frankly, in the context it's not clear if he's talking about God or Christ.

No doubt he has both in mind. But he says that God alone possesses immortality. Now, that word alone means no one else.

Only God is immortal. What about us? Well, in Romans chapter 2, Paul talks about how God and the judgment will reward those who have sought for immortality. With eternal life.

Interestingly. So, God's eternal life, God's immortality is given to us. And thus when Jesus said, whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

That immortality comes as a result of believing in him. That's God's own immortal life. It's God's nature.

And because the Holy Spirit is God, his very holiness is the nature that is imparted to us. Many people when they think in terms of receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit, they think in terms of speaking in tongues or having some kind of powerful, you know, miraculous gifts or something going on. I believe in the gifts of the Spirit.

Why not? The Bible teaches about it. But that's not what the Holy Spirit is mainly about. He's mainly about being holy.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to make you like Jesus. To make you holy as he is holy. And that's God's nature.

That is imparted to us by receiving the divine life through the Holy Spirit coming to us and being born again. And receiving eternal, that is, immortal, divine life from God. We are partakers of this because of these great and precious promises.

Now, these precious promises probably have to do with those promises of eternal life and the Holy Spirit and so forth that we mentioned earlier. These things are the means, these promises of God are the means by which we partake of the divine nature. As we receive the reality because he promised it.

His promises actually impart it to those who believe the promises. That's how faith is. That's how supernatural assistance is from God.

God assists through our faith. When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water, Peter wanted to walk on the water too. None of the other disciples thought about doing that apparently.

But Peter thought that would be cool. I'd like to walk on the water. I'd like to walk like Jesus walks.

Well, that's a good thing to want. I want to walk like Jesus walks too. In fact, 1 John 2 says, He that says he abides in him, let him walk even as he walks.

The desire to be like Jesus and walk like Jesus is a worthy thing to desire. But how can you do that? Jesus was God. How can you walk like Jesus walked? Jesus could walk on water, for crying out loud.

People can't do that. That's supernatural. But then Jesus lived a supernatural life.

Living like Jesus is a supernatural thing. People can't do that on their own. How can I walk as Jesus walked? Well, Peter was determined to do it.

But he didn't jump out in the water and try it. He said, Lord, if that's you, command me to come to you on the water. He didn't jump out of the boat and just try it.

He said, you tell me to do it. And Jesus said, then come on. And as long as he trusted in the power of the word of God, the ability was given.

See, whenever God gives you a command, it may be something you cannot naturally do. But because of the divine nature that's given to you, by the grace of God, you can do what you can't do. You only do it by faith.

It's trusting in his word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. So as he gives the word, and you trust the word, the very command of God is an innate promise.

That if you obey and believe it, what he's commanded you to do, you will do. You can do. When he says, be holy as I am holy, that's a steep assignment.

But if you believe his command and believe in his word, he never gives a command that cannot be fulfilled with his assistance. And if he's commanding something that you can't do naturally, then there's an implicit promise that he intends to give you that assistance. Peter, when he had the command from Christ, was able to walk on water, but only as long as he had faith.

When his faith wavered, he was no better at it than anyone else. And so, through the promises that God's made, and our faith in those promises, comes to us this divine flow of God's life into our existence, so that we live a supernatural life. It may not always look supernatural, but the most supernatural thing about it is that we become more like Jesus.

We're not always going around raising the dead, and healing sick, and doing those kinds of miracles, moving mountains, walking on water. We don't do those kinds of things

probably very much. Some people might have some of that going on in their life, but most of us don't.

But what is clearly supernatural is the divine nature lived out in us, makes us live like Jesus, makes us love people that we wouldn't normally love. Makes us patient, when we wouldn't normally be patient. Makes us have peace that passes understanding, which we wouldn't normally have in the same circumstances, and so forth.

The character and likeness of Jesus, imparted to us by the infusion of the divine nature that Peter talks about, is what makes the Christian life normative. Obviously, the fact that many Christians don't even know that, and they just think, well, you say a prayer, and go to church, and sing the songs, and give your tithe, and that makes you a Christian, means that our churches may have a lot of people in them who aren't normative. They haven't been regenerated in some cases.

They've joined the church like you join a club. They haven't joined the body of Christ like you join a family by being born there. So there's this supernatural impartation of life that Peter takes for granted, and frankly, all the New Testament writers do.

It's just that sometimes Christians in modern times don't. Having said that, he mentions, of course, at the end of verse 4, that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We've escaped by becoming Christians.

The world is corrupt, and by corruption here, we might not think in terms of moral corruption, although there's plenty of that, but the Bible uses the word corruption in the sense of decay. If something is corruptible, it means it decays. If something is incorruptible, it means it doesn't decay.

In 1 Peter 1, Peter said we have an inheritance that's incorruptible. He doesn't mean that it can't be morally compromised, although it can't, but he's making a different point, that it will not fade or decay. Therefore, the world is decaying.

There's the corruption of the fallen order. It does become morally more corrupt, but it also just becomes more decayed. The second law of thermodynamics is taking its toll.

The present order is passing away, but we have escaped that. The world is on a collision course with oblivion and destruction. We were on that course too, but we've stepped off that road, and we're now living a different life in a different way.

We're in an incorruptible inheritance now. So we've escaped the corruption that's in the world through lust. That is, the corruption in the world has come on it because of lust.

Eve lusted for fruit that she wasn't supposed to have. Adam did too. People have been lusting ever since for things they shouldn't have, and this is what has brought disaster on the world.

In the fall, we're breaking loose of that. We're still in the world, of course. We still have physical bodies that are facing corruption, but this corruption will put on incorruption, Paul said.

That's our destiny in the resurrection, which is one of the precious promises that we have by which we escape the corruption that's in the world. Now, verses 5 and following say, but also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue, knowledge, to knowledge, self-control, to self-control, perseverance, to perseverance, godliness, to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, agape, love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge, epikinosko, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, this is a long train of thoughts with a lot of details. It begins with, for this very reason. What reason? Well, because we are now, we've escaped the corruptions in the world.

We're on a different course. We have a different life. We have God's nature in us.

As Peter put it in 1 Peter 2, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word. Okay, you're born again. You've got a new life.

Let's cultivate that. Let's feed that. Let's grow that.

And that's what he's saying here. Let's grow this thing. You've got a new life in you with great potential to become very much Christ-like.

Therefore, let's get on with it and be diligent about it. Now, he said, giving all diligence, which means this is going to take some deliberateness. This is going to take some energy, diligence.

You can't just sit around and hope to grow spiritually. You need to fight the battles of faith. You need to feed your spirit.

You need to obey. You need to discipline yourself. Paul said if we discipline ourselves, we won't have to be disciplined by God.

But we don't discipline ourselves, so we come under God's discipline. But Paul says, I mean Peter here says, giving all diligence, add these things to your life. Now, these things are all things that are part of the divine nature.

So we have the germ of Christ's nature in us, but it has to grow. It has to produce fruit. And we know that he's thinking of these things as fruits of the new life because he says in verse 8, if these things are yours and abound, you will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Christ.

Now, in the knowledge of Christ, he's suggesting that knowing should produce fruit. Apparently, there's a possibility that you could be barren and unfruitful in knowledge, but you shouldn't be. And barrenness and unfruitfulness both bring in imagery from the Old Testament of what God is looking for from his people.

God planted a vineyard, Israel, and he wanted fruit. God expects, in Isaiah, for example, the fruit of the womb is given as an example of the kind of thing God's looking for. It's a figure of speech in Isaiah, but the idea is the church is born from Zion's womb, so to speak.

But the idea is, in the Old Testament, fruit is either crops or else children. When God made Adam and Eve, he said, be fruitful. He means have kids.

Be fruitful and multiply. A womb that doesn't produce children is unfruitful. It's barren.

And he's using the imagery barren and unfruitful. You don't want to be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of God. Now, the knowledge of God, of course, he's not referring simply to theological comprehension of correct doctrine only.

The devil has plenty of good doctrine. He knows the truth, but he doesn't have the life of God, the fruit that God's looking for. To know true things is not the same thing as to know God.

To know about God isn't the same thing as knowing God. To know the Bible isn't the same thing as knowing God. There are people that you could get to know all about by reading their biographies and never having met them or communicated with them.

You don't know them. You just know about them. And you might feel like you know them.

There's a lot of people who, when I meet them, they say, I feel like I know you. I've listened to your radio show for years. I've never met you, but I've heard you talk so much I feel like I know you.

Well, you really just know about me. We've never met. We're not acquainted.

But I can see how that feels. There's people who are so famous or whose biographies I've read enough that I feel like I know them. But they've been dead before I was born, so I don't know them.

You can know all about God. You can read the whole Bible and know what it says and still not know God personally. And this is what this intimate knowledge, this personal

knowledge, is what produces fruit.

You may have found it perplexing sometimes reading the Old Testament when the sexual relationship is called knowing. Like when it says, Adam knew his wife and she conceived and bore Cain. Or even in the New Testament when the angel says that Mary's going to have a child, she says, I don't know a man.

How can I get pregnant when I don't know a man? It's obvious that know, which by the way in those places is the ordinary word in Hebrew and in Greek for knowing, but it's used as a euphemism for having sexual relations. Why is that? Because of course the relation between a man and his wife in a sexual context is very intimate. It's an intimate knowledge.

It's a joining of lives in a way that you don't do in the same way just by conversation. You can get to know a lot about somebody by having a conversation with them, but the joining into one flesh in a marriage is unique. It's a bond.

It's an intimacy that is designed by God not just for the enjoyment of the act itself, but for producing fruit. God made Adam and Eve sexually compatible biologically so that they would have marital relations and what? Be fruitful and multiply. That kind of knowledge, when a man and a woman have that kind of intercourse, the potential is there for the man's nature to be reproduced in his partner.

Christ is the husband. We're the bride. The church is the bride collectively.

The idea is that Christ is looking for us to produce fruit through the knowledge of him. This intimate knowledge of him actually allows for fruit to be produced of his own nature. A reproduction of himself.

That's what Adam did when Adam knew his wife in Genesis 5. It says, and he bore a child in his own likeness and his own image. Adam's image and likeness. His own nature was reproduced in a child.

That's what God set up as a model for what he wants in us. He wants us to have the kind of intimate knowledge of him that brings oneness between him and us and produces his character, his reproduction of himself, as it were, in us. These ideas perhaps may seem a little mystical, but they certainly don't go beyond what the Bible's language itself justifies.

Peter is saying, you know God intimately. His nature is given to you. You're supposed to produce fruit for him.

He says the way to do that is make sure that you keep growing. You have faith. That's a given.

That's what makes you a Christian. You have faith, but you need to add to that faith. It's not enough just to believe.

You need to grow and add more dimensions to your life. Not just that you now believe in Jesus, but you now are adding the virtues of what is all desirable in character. Virtue, like God had.

He says, add to your faith virtue. That same word was used in verse 3 of God, having glory and virtue. It's the character of God.

Add to virtue knowledge. That is, even though you know God, you need to increase in knowledge. Now, here it's not epignosco.

Here it's just gnosco. The reason is because this isn't full knowledge. This is an increasing knowledge.

You need to add more knowledge. If you already have epignosco, there's no more to add. Our epignosco is our intimate, experiential knowledge of God.

This knowledge is just more information. We need to grow in our understanding of the facts and what kind of God he is. This would be an increase in theological savvy, I believe.

We add that to the virtue in our life that we already have. Virtue comes first, though, before theological savvy. It's a higher priority.

Having a righteous life and good character is more important than being profoundly theologically trained. There's nothing wrong with adding that, too. Once you've got the virtue, add more knowledge.

Add to the knowledge what else? Self-control. That's a fruit of the spirit. Fruit.

He's looking for fruit here. Add self-control. How do you do that? All these things you're adding, you can't do this yourself.

Self-control is a fruit of the spirit. Love, which is at the top of this, is a fruit of the spirit. Perseverance is a fruit of the spirit.

These are fruits that the spirit must produce. How do you add them? Obviously, it's assumed that you and the Holy Spirit are cooperating with each other. You're walking in the spirit.

He enables, and you take the steps. You're walking. There's something of a partnership.

We do what we should. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Yield to the Holy Spirit.

Trust in the Holy Spirit. He does what he does. We can't be content not to see these

fruits developing.

We have to be making progress against them. How would you develop self-control? You have to have the Holy Spirit produce that in your character. You can do things.

You can discipline yourself in your life to develop self-control. You can't just sit back and say, I can't beat this gluttony habit. I can't beat this drinking habit or this smoking habit or some other thing.

This anger issue where I fly off the handle every time I'm slightly provoked. I need self-control. That means that while I need God to work in me what is good, there's a need for me to also fight this thing.

It's a spiritual warfare we're in. I need to renounce these things. I need to discipline myself to the degree that God gives me the ability.

As I'm doing what a Christian is commanded to do, and the Holy Spirit's doing what He promises to do, then these characteristics eventually come to fruition in my life. I become more patient, more self-controlled, more virtuous. Add to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness.

Godliness, by the way, means a God orientation, a piety, just being more focused on God, having God more as the center of your thoughts. To godliness, brotherly kindness, and to this, love. Now, you'd think brotherly kindness and love would be two pretty much the same thing, but love is agape.

It goes beyond simply the brotherly kindness. You treat your family with respect if your dad is present. Our dad is, and since he's present, you treat your fellow Christians consistently, as your father would want you to treat your brothers, his other children.

But agape obviously is the pinnacle of virtues. It is becoming truly Christ-like. It's the great commandment.

Jesus said, a new commandment I give you that you love that's agape, one another, as I have loved you. That's the true measure of your spiritual maturity is not how much theological knowledge you've gained, but how much you love consistently in the way that Jesus did, which would be pretty much unconditional. You love your enemies.

You'd even die for them. That's what Jesus did. When you get to that point, you're pretty much where God wants you to be.

If you're not at that point, you keep adding to that. You keep developing that. You keep pursuing that.

Add these things. Don't ever just become complacent and say, I guess I'm as good as most Christians now. This is good enough.

It's not good enough. It may be that God considers you good enough for the moment, but he wants you to keep going. Just like a little kid, when they take their first steps walking, that's good enough.

It's actually much better than they were doing before they did that. But it's not really as good as you want them to do. You want them to be able to run and jump and play like other kids.

It's not good enough for them to stay that way. God accepts us where we are, but he wants us to continue to pursue after maturity and add these things. He says in verse 8, For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You might want to compare this with Colossians chapter 1. Paul says something very similar to this. In Colossians 1, verses 9 and 10, it says, For this reason we also, since the day that we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. That you might be filled with the knowledge of God, and that this might make you fruitful in every good work.

That is in that your behavior is such as pleasing to God. And that's the fruitfulness he's looking for. And Peter says, if you keep adding these things, this is fruitfulness.

This is being fruitful. Now verse 9, he says, For he who lacks these things, this is 2 Peter 1, 9 again, For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Now, I think what he means is the person who isn't continuing to progress in these areas.

Lacking these things might mean lacking the diligence to continue moving forward. That person who thinks he's good enough already, that person who doesn't have any ambition to become more like Christ than they already are, they've forgotten what their Christian life is all about. They've forgotten that God purged them from their sins for a reason, so they become holy, so they become like him.

They've kind of forgotten what it's all about. And they're also short-sighted. They're not looking ahead.

Because if you're not progressing, you're almost certainly going to lose ground. Life is not static. Life is dynamic.

And if you're not pressing on, then you'll be being pulled back. It's like standing in a river that's going swiftly in the direction you don't want to go. That's how the culture is.

That's how the world is. You're in it, and it's pushing you backward. You have to apply

determination to move forward or else it's going to cause you to go backward.

Someone who's not adding these things, someone who lacks these things, is short-sighted. They're not really considering the state of things that they once apparently knew. They've forgotten.

Therefore, brethren, verse 10, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble. Now, these things are all those things you're supposed to add, so he's still on the same thought here. Continue to add these things.

If you do so, you won't stumble. And by doing these things, by continuing these ways, you will make your calling and your election sure. Now, what does it mean to make your election sure? Of course, we have, again, the Calvinist idea is that people have been unconditionally elect.

And the only way you'd know if you're one of the elect is if you persevere. So keep persevering so you can prove and be sure that you're one of the elect. The thing is, though, if that's what proves that someone is elect, if God has elected certain people and what proves it is that they persevere, then if you are one of the elect, you will persevere.

You don't have to prove it. It'll happen because you will do it because that's what being elect results in. But I think that the word sure here needs to be understood as secure, not secure.

Certain. If you say, I'm not sure of something, it means I'm not certain. It might not be the way I think it is.

And when he said make your election sure, he doesn't mean make certain that you're elect. Somehow prove to yourself to your satisfaction that you're elect by doing these things. But rather, the word in the Greek means secure.

To make it sure, to make it secure. That you have a place among the elect, that is, the church, the body of Christ. Now, secure your position rather than drift, rather than move backwards.

Secure your position by adding these things to your life because these things will mean you won't fall away if you add them. The suggestion is if you don't add them, you might fall away. You don't want to fall away.

Secure your position among the elect because otherwise stumbling is a possibility and you don't want that. Stumbling means to fall. For so, verse 11, and so means in this way by adding these things and so forth, by growing and by making progress in your spiritual life, for in this way an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting

kingdom of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, the Bible teaches that we enter the kingdom of God when we're born again. That's what Paul said in Colossians 1.13. He says that we have been translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son, Jesus. So we have entered the kingdom through conversion.

But he talks about a future entrance into the everlasting kingdom. Now, it's not necessary that the kingdom is always spoken of in the same way by every biblical author. There's a future aspect when Jesus comes back and his kingdom is universalized.

The everlasting kingdom seems to be an eschatological thing that Peter is looking at. And if you continue to grow and progress spiritually, your entrance into that kingdom will be abundant. Now, there may be some people who eke in, who have not grown much.

There may be people who make it into the kingdom, but they're not exactly striding in. They may be just barely crawling in because they haven't really fought a good fight. They haven't really made any progress spiritually.

But Peter's putting out the vision there that you have an abundant entrance. The gate is thrown open wide to you. You clearly belong there.

And you make that sure. You make sure that you're going to be there by continuing to grow in the Lord. Now, of course, it raises the question, if someone doesn't grow in the Lord, do they lose their salvation? But the truth is, if they don't grow in the Lord, what makes them think they're alive? What makes them think they even have salvation? Life, by definition, if someone says life, it's a growing thing.

Things that don't grow are things like rocks. They're not alive. So, you prove yourself, and you secure yourself in your position as one of the elect by continuing to grow and make progress in your spiritual life.

And he says in verse 12, Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right as long as I'm in this tent, a term that Paul also used to speak of the present physical body. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul said, in this tent we groan.

He's talking about in this body. He says, yes, I think it is right as long as I'm in this tent to stir up your, stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, means I'm going to die, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

So, these verses are saying, the things I'm telling you are things that you are already established in. You know these are true. This is not news to you.

He says, I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and you are established in the present truth. This truth I'm talking about is something you know and are established in. But apparently, even then, you can lose ground.

And he says, I'm in this body for only a little while more. The Lord has shown me I'm not going to live much longer, so I'm writing this letter to you about things you already know. But that's so that he says, after I'm gone.

Verse 15. Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. So, even though this isn't news, bear with me while I say things you already know, because I'm not always going to be here to say it, but I want to put it down in writing, because that way when I'm gone, my letter will outlive me, and these exhortations will continue to impact you and have an impact on the church.

What he said is, I'm not acting like you don't know this stuff. I'm not pretending like you're ignorant. But I just want to make sure that future generations of Christians aren't ignorant after I'm gone.

And so he puts it down in writing here. Now, we're going to stop at this point. It's a natural turning point.

And we'll come back after our break to verse 16.