

LESSON NINE - 1 & 2 PETER
2 PETER 1:1-11

1. Introduction and greeting. 1:1-2.
 1. At the outset of a letter that will contain substantial rebuke, Peter identifies himself and states his credentials.
 1. His credentials are twofold - a combination of humility and authority, one of which connects him with his readers, the other with Christ.
 1. He is a servant (*doulos*).
 1. This is a title of humility taken as a title by the greatest men of scripture.
 1. Moses, the great lawgiver. Deut. 34:5.
 2. Joshua, the great commander. Josh. 24:29.
 3. David, the great king. 2 Sam. 3:18; Psa. 78:70.
 4. Paul, the great apostle. Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1.
 5. James and Jude, the brother of the Lord. James 1:1; Jude 1:1.
 6. Old Testament prophets. Amos 3:7; Isaiah 20:3.
 7. Christians. 1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:24.
 1. He is inalienably possessed by God
 2. He is unqualifiedly at the disposal of God.
 3. He owes an unquestioning obedience to God.
 4. He must be constantly in the service of God.
 2. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ.
 1. Peter was one of that special group that had a special relationship with and a special responsibility to Jesus.
 2. Peter was an opener of doors (the keys to the kingdom, Matt. 16:19).
 1. Peter was the first to declare the Messiahship of the Lord. Matt. 16:16.
 2. Peter was the first among the apostles to see the risen Lord. 1 Cor. 15:5.
 3. Peter was the first after the descent of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to his fellow-men. Acts 2.
 4. Peter was among the first to endure and defy the rage of the persecutor. Acts 4.
 5. Peter was the first to declare the gospel to the Gentiles. Acts 10.
Comment: [For a discussion of the meaning of "the keys of the kingdom" see Lesson 1, (4, (b), (iii.) on the "Church" at www.thywordistruth.com.
 2. Those addressed are those who have obtained a "like precious faith."
 1. It is a faith equal in honor and privilege.

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1. The word was used of a foreigner who was given equal citizenship in a city with the natives.
2. Joesphus says that in Antioch the Jews were made *isotimoi*, *equal in honor and privilege*, with the Macedonians and the Greeks who lived there.
3. So Peter addresses those who had been despised Gentiles, but who had been given equal rights with the Jews and even with the apostles themselves in the kingdom of God.
2. It is a faith obtained "by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (NASB.)
 1. In the Greek there is only one Person involved (the two nouns are joined together by a single article).
 2. Peter clearly call Jesus God, as do other scriptures. John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20.
 3. The early Christians were fully convinced that Jesus fully embodied God. Col. 2:9.
3. Peter uses the word "Savior" by which he builds his plea for Christian growth and attacks "Christian license" on the fact that his readers have found salvation.
 1. Savior is one of the great names of God in the Old Testament.
 2. Peter is boldly taking the Old Testament name for Yahweh and applying it to Jesus.
2. The importance of knowledge.
 1. His prayer for his readers is the same as in 1 Peter -- grace and peace.
 2. There is, however, an important addendum -- be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.
 1. Grace and peace are to come from knowledge.
 2. In what way is this accomplished? Titus 2:11-12.
 3. The word that Peter uses for "knowledge" is *epignosis*.
 1. It is a compound of *gnosis*, the ordinary Greek word for knowledge, joined with the prefix *epi*, which means "towards, in the direction of."
 2. It can be understood in two ways.
 1. It can mean increasing knowledge, or knowledge that is always moving further in the direction of that which it seeks to know; grace and peace are multiplied to the Christian as he comes to know Jesus Christ better and better.
 2. Often in Greek it means "full knowledge."

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1. Plutarch uses it of the scientific knowledge of music as opposed to the knowledge of the amateur.
2. It may be that the implication here is what we might call "the master-science of life."
3. The other sciences may bring new skill, new knowledge, new abilities, but the master-science, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, alone brings the grace men need and the peace for which their hearts crave.
3. Knowledge was a much used word in the pagan religions of the day.
 1. For example, the Greeks defined *sophia*, *wisdom*, as knowledge of things both human and divine.
 2. The Greek seekers after God sought that knowledge in two main ways.
 1. They sought it by philosophic speculation, *i.e.*, they sought to reach God by the sheer power of human thought.
 1. Job 11:7 states one of the primary problems with this approach. (**Job 11:7** Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?)
 2. If God is ever to be known, he must be known based on his desire to reveal himself, not because man discovers him.
 3. Further, if religion is based on philosophic speculation it will be the reserve of precious few people.
 4. Whatever Peter mean by "knowledge" he did not mean that.
 2. They sought it by mystical experience of the divine until they would say, "I am thou and thou art I."
 1. This was the way of the mystery religions.
 2. But there are also problems here.
 1. Not every one is capable of mystical experiences.
 2. Further, such experiences are necessarily transient or temporary; it may leave an effect, but it cannot be a continual experience.
 3. Many modern religions have taken this route.
 1. They are like an actor recently interviewed and, when asked about the increasing nature of violence, explained that as audiences become accustomed to gore and violence, there must be increasing violence and new ways to spread the gore to keep them

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interested.

2. Years ago, churches that had instrumental music in worship usually had just a piano or perhaps an organ in the richer ones. Today it takes a full orchestra and a 100 voice choir to keep people's interest.
 3. While much of it is not shown on TV, television preachers spend a great deal of time whipping their audiences into a frenzy so that they get the "proper" response.
 4. If this knowledge of Christ does not come from philosophic speculation or mystical experience, what is it and how does it come?
 1. In the New Testament knowledge is characteristically personal knowledge. 2 Tim. 1:12.
 2. Christian knowledge of Christ is personal acquaintance with him; it is knowing him as a person and day by day entering into a more intimate relationship with him.
 3. The only source of this knowledge is the Scripture. Rom. 10:17.
2. The Christian Privileges. 1:3-4.
1. The greatness of Jesus Christ for men.
 1. He is the Christ of power.
 1. In him there is a divine power than cannot be defeated or frustrated.
 2. How often has love been frustrated because it cannot give what it desires to give or cannot do what it desires to do.
 3. Christ's love is backed by his power.
 2. He is the Christ of generosity.
 1. He bestows on us all things necessary to life and godliness.
 2. The term that Peter uses for "godliness" is *eusebeia*, the basic meaning of which is piety or practical religion.
 3. Peter is saying that Jesus Christ tells us what life is and then gives us everything that is necessary to live it as it ought to be lived.
 3. He is the Christ of exceeding great and precious promises.
 1. Peter's emphasis here is not so much that Christ gave us exceeding great and precious promises, though that it true.
 2. His emphasis is that in Christ these exceeding great and precious promises come true.
 3. Paul put the same thing in a different way in 2 Cor. 1:20 -- For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

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4. He is the Christ in whom we escape the world's corruption.
 1. Peter had to meet the antinomians, the people who used the grace of God as an excuse to sin.
 2. Any man who speaks like that demonstrates that he wants to sin.
 3. So long as we live in this world sin will have its fascination for us, but in the presence of Christ we have our defense against that fascination.
 4. We escape the world's corruption in two senses.
 1. By the new birth we are freed from sin.
 2. By the resurrection we are freed from the corruption of the flesh.
5. He is the Christ who makes us sharers in the divine nature.
 1. Here again Peter uses a word that was well known to pagan thinkers.
 2. They spoke of sharing in the divine nature, but they believed that man had a share of the divine nature by virtue of being a man.
 3. The trouble with that is that both life and scripture flatly contradict it.
 1. On every side we see bitterness, hatred, lust, and crime.
 2. On every side we see moral failure, helplessness and frustration.
 4. Christianity says that man is capable of becoming a sharer in the divine nature.
 1. It frankly faces man's actuality without limiting his potentiality. John 10:10.
 2. As one of the early "church fathers" said: "He became what we are to make us what he is."
 3. Man has the potentiality to share in the nature of God, but only in Jesus Christ can that potentiality be realized. Rom. 6:1-7.
3. Equipment for the way. 1:5-7.
 1. Having established that the Christian has a new nature in which he enjoys great and precious promises, he now proceeds to equip them "for this very cause" to live in such a manner that they may enter the everlasting kingdom, the promise with which he concludes this section. v. 11.
 1. The grace of God demands effort on the part of man; it is a commitment not only to the promises of Christ, but also to his demands.
 2. To demonstrate that effort Peter lists a group of qualities (commonly called the "Christian virtues" but perhaps more aptly called "fruit" of the Christian life, see v. 8) that should be found in a healthy Christian life.
 3. The Christian is to "add" these virtues to his faith.
 1. The word "add" is an interesting word -- *epichorēgō* .

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2. It is a metaphor drawn from the Athenian drama festivals in which a rich individual, called the *chorēgōs*, paid for the expenses of the large chorus that accompanied the drama.
 3. Though expensive, the *chorēgoi* vied with one another in the generosity of their equipment and training of the choruses.
 4. As the word came to include to equip an army with all of the necessary equipment to fight its battles, so Peter uses it to describe the equipment that the Christian soldier needs for life.
 5. The Christian is not to add them in a stingy and limited way; it is not to be done with a necessary minimum, but in a lavish and generous way.
2. Peter begins his list with "faith."
1. Faith is the foundation stone on which the virtues that follow are built.
 2. Compare the primary position that Paul give to faith in Romans 5:1-5
 1. Everything goes back to faith.
 2. For Peter faith is the conviction that what Jesus Christ says is true and that we can commit ourselves to his promises and launch ourselves on his demands.
 3. It is the unquestioning certainty that the way to happiness and peace and strength on earth and in heaven is to accept him at his word.
 3. The Christian is to exert on his part all diligence to add these Christian virtues.
 1. The Christian is to bend every energy to accomplish his goal.
 2. In the Christian life there is to be a constant moral advance.
 3. As one writer said, "The Christian life is not to be an initial spasm followed by a chronic inertia."
 4. It is apt to be just that, a moment of enthusiasm when the wonder of Christianity is realized, and then a failure to work out the Christian life in continuous progress.
 5. Faith does not exempt a man from works; the generosity of God does not absolve a man from effort.
 6. Life is at its noblest and its best when our effort cooperates with God's grace to produce the necessary beauty -- the beauty of holiness.
3. The fruits to be added.
1. "Virtue" or "courage."
 1. The word that Peter uses is rare in the New Testament but common in non-Christian literature.
 2. It means "excellence" and was used to denote the successful fulfillment

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of anything.

3. The "excellence" of a knife is to cut, or a horse to run.
4. But what is the "excellence" of a Christian?
 1. Peter gives a strong hint in v. 3 -- "whereunto he called us by his on glory and *virtue*."
 2. The Christian's life must reflect something of the character of Christ for he was the man *par excellence*.
 3. True human excellence is that manliness that is Christlikeness.
 4. This is where the false teachers had gone wrong -- they talked a good deal about faith, but exhibited in their lives none of the practical goodness that is indispensable to genuine Christian discipleship.
2. "Knowledge."
 1. Christianity is not merely a matter of personal faith and practical goodness; the intellectual element in our personalities has an important place.
 2. The word Peter uses here is *gnosis*.
 1. In ethical Greek language there are two words that have a similar meaning but also have a very significant difference.
 1. *Sophia*.
 1. This is wisdom in the sense of knowledge of things both human and divine, and of their causes.
 2. It is knowledge of first causes and of deep and ultimate things.
 2. *Gnosis*.
 1. *Gnosis* is practical wisdom; it is the ability to apply to particular situations that ultimate knowledge that *sophia* gives.
 2. *Gnosis* is that knowledge that enables a man to decide rightly and to act honorably in the everyday circumstances of life.
 3. Knowledge was one of the favorite words of the false teachers Peter addresses, but he was not on that account afraid to use it.
 1. He was confident that the God who had revealed himself in Jesus was the God of truth.
 2. Knowledge, therefore, could never harm the Christian.
 3. Peter would have no truck with that so-called faith that shrinks from investigation lest the resultant knowledge should prove destructive.

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[In our day those who seem to be most afraid of investigation are those who fight even the suggestion that creationism should have a place in our educational system. Perhaps this is caused by the fact that everywhere creationism and evolution clash creationism carries the day.]

4. Trust has nothing to do with obscurantism.
5. The cure for false knowledge is not less knowledge, but more.
3. "Self-control."
 1. This is to be exercised not only in food and drink, but in every aspect of the Christian's life.
 2. The word is not common in the New Testament but was highly prized in Greek moral philosophy.
 3. It means to control the passions instead of being controlled by them; literally, the ability to get a grip on oneself.
 4. Aristotle distinguishes four states in life.
 1. There is *sophrosune*, in which passion has been entirely subjugated to reason; we might call it perfect temperance.
 2. There is *akolasia*, which is the precise opposite; it is the state in which reason is entirely subjugated to passion; we might call it unbridled lust.
 3. In between these two states there is *akrasia*, in which reason fights but passion prevails; we might call it incontinence.
 4. There is *egrateia*, in which reason fights against passion and reason prevails; we call it self-control.
 5. Christian self-control is submission to the control of Christ.
 6. Once again Peter uses a word that must have cut the false teachers like a whip lash.
 1. They claimed that knowledge released them from the need for self-control.
 2. Peter emphasize that true knowledge leads on to self-control.
 3. Any system that divorces religion from ethics is fundamental heresy.
4. "Patience."
 1. From self-control springs patience (perseverance or steadfastness), the temper of mind that is unmoved by difficulty and distress and that can withstand the two Satanic agencies of opposition from the world without and enticement from the flesh within.

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2. Patience is really too passive a word because *hupomone* always has a background of courage.
 3. This patience is no stoic quality of accepting all that comes as from the dictates of blind fate.
 4. It springs from the promises of God, the knowledge of Christ, and experience of his divine power. vv. 3-4.
 5. And so it produces in the Christian a deepened awareness of a Father's wise and loving hand controlling all that happens.
 6. It always has a forward look in it.
 7. Like Jesus himself, who for the joy set before him endured the cross (Heb. 12:2), we are enabled to see our apparent misfortunes in the calm light of eternity.
 8. It is the courageous acceptance of everything that life can do to us and the transmuting of even the worst event into another step on the upward way.
5. "Godliness."
1. The word used here, *eusebeia*, is rare in the New Testament, perhaps because it was the common word for "religion" in the pagan world.
 1. It carries with it the idea of reverence or piety, the man who was careful and correct in performing his duties both to gods and men.
 2. Perhaps Peter uses it here in deliberate contrast to the false teachers who were far from proper in their behavior to God and to their fellow man.
 3. It suggests a practical awareness of God in every aspect of life.
 2. We may best see its meaning by looking at the man whom the Greeks held to be its finest example.
 1. That man was Socrates.
 2. Xenophon described Socrates thusly: "He was so pious and devoutly religious that he would take no step apart from the will of heaven; so just and upright that he never did even a trifling injury to any living soul; so self-controlled, so temperate, that he never at any time chose the sweeter instead of the better; so sensible, so wise, and so prudent that in distinguishing the better from the worse he never erred.
6. "Brotherly-kindness."
1. Godliness cannot exist without brotherly-kindness. 1 John 4:20.
 2. The word is *philadelphia*, which literally means love of the brethren.

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3. Those who have become partakers of the divine nature or, as Peter puts it in 1 Peter (1:23) have been born again, must show their royal birth in royalty of behavior towards other children of the King, whatever their differences in such things as culture and class.
4. This is another area in which the false teachers were deficient.
5. There is something wrong with the religion that finds the claims of human relationships a nuisance.
7. "Love."
 1. The list of Christian fruits ends in Christian love.
 2. Not even affection for the brethren is enough; the Christian must end with a love that is as wide as that love of God who causes his sun to rise of the just and on the unjust, and sends his rain on the evil and the good.
 3. The Christian must show to all men the love that God has shown to him.
 1. The word is the familiar *agape*, a word that Christians for all practical purposes coined to denote the attitude that God has shown to us and requires from us to him.
 2. In friendship (*philia*) the partners seek mutual solace; in sexual love (*eros*) mutual satisfaction.
 3. In both cases these feelings are aroused because of what the loved one is.
 4. With *agape* it is the reverse.
 1. God's *agape* is evoked not because of what we are, but because of what he is.
 2. It has its origin not in the object but in the agent.
 3. It is not that we are lovable (Rom. 5:8), but that he is love.
 4. This *agape* might be defined as a deliberate desire for the highest good of the one loved which shows itself in sacrificial action for that person's good.
4. Barren and unfruitful Christians. vv. 8-9.
 1. The true knowledge of Christ, as opposed to the false, does produce these moral and spiritual qualities -- they make you.
 1. Lack of spiritual growth is a sign of spiritual death.
 2. But it is not enough to possess the minimum amount of these virtues.
 1. They must not only be in you, they must abound.
 2. This is a word that Paul uses often to designate the abundance of

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spiritual gifts and works that he wants his readers to have.

3. The knowledge (*epignosis*, which some suggest is the key word in this epistle) of Jesus Christ is a significant phrase, and is perhaps directed toward the false teachers' boasting of their knowledge already complete.
 1. This *epignosis* is a part of the "divine nature" in which we have fellowship.
 2. The fact that this true knowledge also knows "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," its source, is self evident.
4. Recall that it is through this *epignosis* that we receive exceeding great and precious promises. v. 3.
2. He who lacks these qualities not only fails to receive these exceeding great and precious promises, but he is:
 1. Blind and cannot see afar off.
 1. We are left without the guiding light that Jesus Christ brings; to walk without Christ is to walk in the dark and not be able to see the way.
 2. The word translated "cannot see afar off" (*muopazon*) has two possible meanings.
 1. Shortsighted.
 1. It is easy to become shortsighted in life, to see things only as they appear at the moment and to be unable to take the long view of things.
 2. It is to have one's eyes set so firmly upon things of the earth that he never thinks of the things that are beyond. Heb. 11:26-27.
 2. Blinking, shutting the eyes.
 1. It is easy in life to shut our eyes to what we do not wish to see, and to walk, as it were, in blinkers.
 2. To walk without Christ is to be in danger of taking the short-sighted or the blinkered view of life.
 2. Forgotten his conversion when he was baptized into Christ as a penitent believer.
 1. The man who, after baptism, does not begin the upward climb has forgotten the meaning of the experience through which he has passed.
 2. To make our commitment and then to remain exactly the same is to fail to understand what being a Christian means.
5. A Worthy Goal. vv. 10-11.
 1. In view of all of this Peter urges his readers to make every effort to confirm their calling.

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1. He enforces his appeal by calling them "brethren"; he joins himself to his readers and separates himself and them from the gospel of loose living and from all of its adherents.
2. It seems the false teachers boasted of their calling while making that an excuse for every kind of license, as though they had permission to sin.
3. Christian calling and Christian living go together.
4. The word used for "making sure" is in the middle voice, which means "you make secure for yourselves and continue to do so."
 1. This personal assurance is to rest on the true evidence, namely that outlined earlier.
 2. It is never to rest only on our own claim and assertion that we are the called and elect.
2. If you confirm your calling with a life agreeable to it, Peter concludes, two results will follow.
 1. You will never stumble or fall.
 1. The metaphor is drawn from the surefootedness of the horse.
 2. While in some passages it seems to mean "sin," here it seems to be more in line with Jude 24.
 3. It is connected with v. 11, and pictures the Christian walking down the road that will lead into the eternal kingdom; if he does not stumble on the road he will reach his destination.
 2. You will receive an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 1. Words are piled upon one another to excite the weary pilgrim's heart at the splendor of that destination.
 2. If you will generously put yourself out for God, God will generously put himself out for you.
 3. The metaphor may be drawn from the homecoming of the ancient Olympic hero who entered his hometown not by the usual gate, but from a place in the wall that was specially broken down to afford him entrance.
 4. Years ago there were two songs -- Rusty Old Halo and A Cabin in the Corner of Gloryland.
 1. How different they are from what God promises.
 2. Those who are satisfied with such are longing for something that God will not provide.
 3. The kingdom of which Peter speaks has three characteristics.

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1. It is everlasting or eternal.
2. It is future; like Abraham the Christian is not to be content with anything earthly, but is to press on towards that city that hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God. Heb. 11:10.
3. Peter maintains the tension that we have seen before between what we now have and and what we shall yet have.
4. It belongs to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 1. The noblest description of heaven is in personal descriptions such as this.
 2. It will embody harmonious and beautiful relationships between the Savior and the saved.