

Prayer List

Cyndie, Nichole & Lauren
Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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Grace and Works, Knowledge and Salvation - 2 Peter

1:1-11

By Ethan R. Longhenry

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust. Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1-11).

As Peter begins his second letter to Christians, he again considers the nature of salvation and the expectation of certain forms of conduct from God's people. Passages like this demonstrate the absurdity of the bifurcation of Protestant thought. Protestants have obsessed over the distinction between "faith" and "works", and often do all they can to avoid

This Week's Question:

What army man was given a feast when he joined the side of David?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Jephithah - Judges 11:1-2

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any form of "works based salvation", whatever that would mean. Sure, they recognize the need for obedience to God, but such is always considered an afterthought in any discussion. What must be primarily emphasized is that salvation is not by works.

Peter (and Paul, for that matter) here is not bothered by the Protestant obsession. The "discrepancy" between "salvation by grace" and obedience is simply not there. He asserts without qualification that we have obtained a "like precious faith" with the Apostles themselves in the righteousness of Jesus (2 Peter 1:1). He then continues in 2 Peter 1:3-4 by establishing that all things pertaining to life and godliness have been given to us by His divine power, and that He has granted us many great promises based upon our redemption from the corruption of the world.

So far this sounds like "good" "salvation by grace" theology. And yet Peter's conclusion to this is for the believer him or herself to add diligence, faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, kindness, brotherly love, and love (2 Peter 1:5-7). Such things allow one to abound, growing mightily in the faith in the knowledge of the Lord-- but the lack of these qualities indicates that a person is blind, having forgotten that they have been cleansed of their former sins (2 Peter 1:8-9). So much for standard Protestant theology! Peter clearly has no difficulty with the idea of works having a role in one's final salvation.

2 Peter 1:10-11 provides further demonstration of this: we must give diligence to make our calling and election sure, and in so doing we will be supplied with the entrance into the eternal Kingdom.

It is a puzzling thing how one could read such verses and come away with the standard Protestant "faith/works" distinctions. Such things are clearly imposed on the text. Yes, the Bible makes it clear that we are not saved by our works--nothing we can do can make up for our sin (Romans 1-4). We must have the grace of God, manifest to us in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sin (Romans 3-5). Nevertheless, there is a full expectation that the forgiveness of sin and the acceptance of this mighty salvation will lead one to be an obedient servant of Christ (Romans 6-8)!

This is what Peter makes clear: yes, we have the opportunity to have faith, even equal faith with the Apostles, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We have all of these wonderful promises given to us in His divine power. Yet the result is that we should be out doing things. The result is that we develop our own faith and its attendant qualities.

It is also interesting to note the connection between the knowledge of Christ and practicing of the truth. Grace and peace is to be multiplied in the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 1:2). All of the aspects of 2 Peter 1:5-7 lead one, in verse 8, to being not idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Knowledge and action are to be mixed in the life of the

Christian: one cannot learn how to discern good from evil without the knowledge of what is good and what is evil, yet one will not train one's powers of discernment to that end without constant practice (cf. Hebrews 5:14). Practicing righteousness leads to being fruitful in the knowledge of Christ; the knowledge of Christ ought to lead one to practice righteousness.

2 Peter 1:9 itself is quite telling, for Peter's words presuppose the recognition that receiving the forgiveness of sin must be followed by obedience to God. Peter establishes in 2 Peter 1:9 that if one lacks the qualities of faith described in verses 5-7, one has forgotten how he or she has been forgiven of sin. How can Peter be so secure in his conclusion? Peter, of all people, recognizes how great a salvation is effected through Jesus Christ. If a person recognizes what sin is, the nature of sin, the consequences of sin, the fact that they have sinned, and that they have been able to escape from all such things through Christ's blood, such a one will be humbled, thankful, gracious, and so happy at his fortune that he will do whatever is necessary to please his Lord. It is only when a person forgets where he or she came from and forgets about the greatness of the salvation which he or she received that he or she becomes slack in their faith and its attendant virtues, being blinded by present circumstance.

This idea is not new to Peter; Paul establishes the same in Titus 3:3-8. Yet it is a very critical thing to those who would profess Christ. Let us not fall for the Protestant trap, forcing a sixteenth century controversy upon the first century. There is no contradiction between salvation by grace through faith and obedience to God. It is not enough to simply profess Jesus; the expectation is that you recognize how great a salvation has been accomplished on your behalf without you doing a thing about it, and be therefore willing to devote your life to the One who devoted His life to you. And this is the promise: with diligence, faith, virtue, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly love, and love, we will not be idle but will be fruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, making our calling and election sure. If we ever forget where we came from, or forget about the salvation that God provided for us, we become blind, and stumble into the pit.

Let us all indeed grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)! From Expository Files 15.2; February 2008