

The Riches of Our Salvation

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3–7

Code: 1396

REVIEW

When I took a three-month sabbatical during the summer of 1980, the Lord redefined my priorities and reaffirmed His call to the ministry at Grace Church. I got my second wind that summer. I came back with renewed vigor and excitement about the church and the work of God. The Lord taught me the importance of being used to remind believers of truth they already know. I sensed there had to be a new commitment and a new perspective in ministry based on my reading of 2 Peter 1.

I. THE MINISTRY OF REMEMBRANCE (vv. 12-15)

"I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth. Yea, I think it fitting, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me. Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance."

We can easily forget spiritual truth, and that was what brought disaster to the nation of Israel. Early in the nation's history, God told them He feared that once they entered the Promised Land they would forget Him (Deut. 8:14). That is exactly what they did. Our ministry is to be one of remembrance. That's one reason for the Lord's Table--that we might forever remember Him and His sacrifice for us. So we are challenged to overcome the indifference that is bred by familiarity.

A. The Purpose of Remembrance

1. The importance of living spiritual truth (see pp. xx-xx)

God has endowed the human brain with the capacity to reinforce spiritual truth. When we continually feed on the Word of God, we will respond in a spiritual manner almost involuntarily. When we do so our brain becomes our friend. But our brain also can be our enemy when we dwell on things that aren't pure. The old seventeenth-century saint Thomas Fuller wrote, "Almost twenty years ago I heard a profane jest and still I remember it. How many pious passages of far later date have I utterly forgotten? It seems my soul is like a filthy pond where fish die soon and frogs live long. Lord, raise this profane jest out of my memory. Leave not a letter thereof behind lest my corruption seek it out again. And, Lord, be pleased to write some pious meditation in the place thereof and grant, Lord, for the time to come that I may be careful not to admit what I find so difficult to expel." That's a great truth! The Bible tells us to guard our hearts and minds (Prov. 4:23-27).

B. The Purifying Agent

It is said that many years ago a famous minister greeted a woman who was washing wool in a sieve. When she recognized the minister she said, "I shall have all eternity to be grateful for one sermon that you preached." He asked, "What did I say in that sermon?" She replied, "I can't remember. It's like this sieve--the sieve doesn't hold the water, but the water runs through and cleanses the wool. My memory doesn't keep the words, but blessed be God, He made them touch and purify my heart." Now I'm under no illusion that you remember everything I say. But I do believe that in the process of hearing a sermon, the words act as a purifying agent. Although we may not always retain all the facts, the Word of God is so powerful that just hearing it can conform us to the image of Christ.

2. The danger of forgetting spiritual truth In Revelation 2:1-7 I see an interesting parallel between the

church at Ephesus and Grace Church. Revelation 1 pictures the Lord as moving among the lampstands (the different churches in Asia Minor) and ministering to them and their pastors. a) The church at Ephesus Beginning in Revelation 2 are seven letters the apostle John writes to seven churches in Asia Minor on Christ's behalf. Revelation 2:2 begins the letter to the church at Ephesus-- a great church pastored by Paul and Timothy that was responsible for founding all the other churches of Asia Minor. Godly elders grew out of that church, and it had a tremendous testimony to the world.(1) Its ministry In verse 2 our Lord says, "I know thy works." Christ understood the quality of the Ephesian ministry. Now He gives the specifics.(a) It held to a godly standard Christ said further on in the verse that He knew of the church's "labor" (Gk., kopos). That means the people offered exhausting service. Christ knew Ephesus to be a busy, aggressive, active church involved in teaching, sharing, giving, planning, and working. He also said He knew of their "patience." That means they were steadfast--they had the courage to accept hardship. Christ knew they had persevered despite tremendous opposition. They knew what it took to confront an evil society with a godly standard and accept what came as a result of holding that standard high.(b) It was intolerant of sin Revelation 2:2 also says Christ knew the church could not "bear them who are evil." The church at Ephesus was intolerant of sin. They suppressed evil through discipline. They not only taught the principles of behavior, but also conformed its people to that behavior.(c) It exposed false doctrine In verse 2 Christ also says, "Thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." The church's theology and courage enabled it to unmask false doctrine and its false prophets.(d) It labored in Christ's name In verse 3 Christ says, "[You] hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." The church at Ephesus persevered and sacrificed for the goal of glorifying God. Then Christ says, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (v. 6). The people shared God's attitude toward things.(2) Its failure In spite of all it had going for it, somehow the church at Ephesus lost its perspective. Verse 4 says, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Ephesus never got its second wind. They blazed through the first few laps. The adventure of discovery was thrilling. In the early years when Paul and Timothy were there, they won people to Christ and established churches throughout Asia Minor. But they weren't able to settle into the ministry of remembrance. The fire went out; the honeymoon was over.(3) Its reminder Our Lord says one word to them that stands out in verse 5: "Remember." There was nothing new for Him to tell them. He said, "Repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy lampstand." The church didn't repent, so He removed it from existence.b) The church at Sardis In Revelation 3:2 Christ warns the church at Sardis to be "watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Why were they ready to die? In verse 1 Christ says, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." In verse 3 Christ offers the same remedy He did to the Ephesians: "Remember." You can't go forward until you go backward. It's vital to remember.

B. The Theme of Remembrance

(This point is discussed in chapter three.)

In 1980 I sensed the Spirit of God telling me and the congregation of Grace Church that our honeymoon had been glorious far beyond anything any of us ever dreamed might happen, but that it was important for us to get our second wind. I believed then, and still believe even now that the future is better than the past. God is still "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). But that is based on our ability to remember the past and to keep the fire hot.

II. THE SPECIFICS OF REMEMBRANCE (vv. 1-11, 16-21)

Peter urged believers to remember spiritual truth so that it might control their minds and produce spiritual responses. What is it Peter wants us to remember?

A. The Reality of Our Salvation (vv. 1-2; see pp. xx-xx)

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus, our Lord."

B. The Riches of Our Salvation (vv. 3-4)

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; by which are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

1. Present possessions (v. 3)

Peter says, "His divine power hath given unto us all things" (v. 3). When you became a believer, you gained instant possession of all things that pertain to life and godliness. When you were born again as a believer, you were born as a whole being with all the composite parts of God's new creation. It is like the birth of a baby--all the essential parts are there, needing only to grow--as opposed to a polliwog, which eventually sprouts legs and becomes a frog.

a) The source of our potential
The source of all things pertaining to life and godliness is God's divine power--the same unlimited, eternal power that created the universe. God's overwhelming energy is concentrated on providing all your needs. What an incredible thought! It amazed me to discover the number of Christians across this country who are uninformed about their potential through the power of God. Verse 3 says God gave us our potential--we didn't earn it because it was undeserved and offered by grace.

b) The characteristics of our potential
(1) Life and godliness
Verse 3 says God has given us "all things pertaining to life and godliness." Life refers to the life of God in the soul of man, an internal reality. Godliness is the manifestation of that life, an external reality. When you were redeemed, you received the riches of salvation. That means your salvation provides everything necessary to transform you on the inside and the outside. Therefore we have no excuse for not living godly lives. Verse 3 says we receive life and godliness "through the knowledge of him that hath called us." When you came to know God, you came into possession of all that is needed for an internal transformation and an external manifestation of that transformation. It is unnecessary for Christians to ask God for things they already have, yet many do that all the time. They need only to realize that they have those things and then appropriate them. For example, people frequently pray for the Lord to lead them. It must frustrate the Lord because He is constantly leading His children (Rom. 8:14). All they need to do is apply their will to follow. We ask the Lord for strength, yet God has already given us strength beyond our wildest dreams (Phil. 4:13). Do you realize what is yours in Christ? You can overcome anything! The book of Revelation says believers are overcomers (2:7, 17). Some Christians are fearful about committing themselves to a ministry because they don't know if they can handle it. They don't understand their resources. According to Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, God has given every one of us spiritual gifts to minister to the Body of Christ that we might reach the world for Him. We stifle that plan when we have an inadequate understanding of our resources.

(2) Glory and virtue
Verse 3 tells us that God has called us to glory and virtue. This is a parallel concept to life and godliness. Life and glory are internal; godliness and virtue are external. God has given us all we need for the internal and external because He has called us to internal glory and external virtue. Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Saving faith is not the kind of faith that redeems you but doesn't do anything else for you. It redeems you and then sustains you in a life of responding to God. It follows that where there's life, there's godliness; and where there's glory, there's virtue. If your life is not virtuous and godly, it's not because there's a lack of resources but a lack of determination to apply them.

c) The manifestation of our potential
(1) Confirmed by our position
Have you forgotten your position in Christ? Ephesians 1:3 says God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

(2) Released by God's power
Many great things have happened in our fellowship at Grace Church, but I don't think we've even scratched the surface. Ephesians 3:20 says, "Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly

abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." It is a joy to preach that to people who have been Christians for years and have no clue to the power available to them. Many Christians are afraid to witness for Christ because they sense a terrible ineptitude. I am frequently asked, "If I could pray for one thing for you, what would it be?" I would like people to pray that the power of God might be released in my ministry. I've had a taste of His power, and I don't want to try to serve in this ministry under the power of my own flesh. There's a lot of effort going on in the name of Christ that is devoid of spiritual power. Colossians 2:9 says that in Christ "dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily." The power of God is in Christ. The gospels show Jesus create, forgive sin, and do other things--that only the power of God can do. Then verse 10 says, "Ye are complete in him." God is in Christ and Christ is in you, and so is His power. In Philippians 1:9 Paul calls God's power the "supply of the Spirit." You have all you need for God's power to be released in incomparable ways in your life.

2. Future promises (v. 4)

Verse 4 says that by knowing God "are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." God has given us not only all we need for now, but also great and precious promises for tomorrow. He has taken us right out of the corruption of lust in the world and made us share in His divine nature. If you're not living above the evil of the world, then somehow you're jamming the signals because God's power is available. I don't think we've even begun to see what God can do until we find ourselves totally cleansed with His power flowing through us. Verse 4 says we have "great and precious promises." The Greek word translated "precious" is *timios*, which emphasizes unequalled value. Our promises are without equal. I think Peter is exercising a play on words because in verse 1 he uses a different form of the same word in "like precious faith," which means faith of equal value. Our faith of equal value is based on unequalled promises. And all that is based on the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:19). Have you forgotten the riches of your salvation? Many Christians perceive the Christian life as being a set of rules. They think they're spiritual when they live up to that standard. Yet they're sitting on divine dynamite and don't even know it. The whole of their Christian perspective is negative rather than positive. We are rich in resources. Don't ever forget that. When you remember your resources you have nothing to fear--not even Satan himself-- for "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

C. The Responsibility Inherent in Our Salvation (vv. 5-7)

1. The paradox

Some people believe that since the Lord has made every provision, we ought to "let go and let God." My motto is "hold on and let God." Don't let go! The Quietists believed you didn't have to do anything in the Christian life. They were spiritually passive. I don't believe we should be like that. It is true that God has done it all. He has given us a like precious faith, divine power, exceedingly precious promises, and a divine nature. And He has taken us out of the corruption of the world. Yet verse 5 says, "And beside this" There's more! The literal rendering is, "For this very reason." Since God has done it all, you're to do your part. That's a paradox you find throughout Scripture. God does it all yet we have a part. Peter says, "Giving all diligence, add" (v. 5). We are to give everything we've got to add to all we have been given. We have all we need, but we have to apply it. That's God's call.

2. The progression

a) The basic foundation (v. 5a) What is our responsibility? Verse 5 says, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith." The basic ingredient in the Christian life is faith, which is believing and trusting in God. You start with faith and add to it. The Christian is saved by faith and lives by faith. That's the only way to live. I hear many people say, "We're worried about what's happening in the world" or "If things don't change in our country, we're finished." Christians shouldn't live that way. We don't live by the media; we live by faith in God. Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." In

Galatians 3:3 Paul asks, "Having begun in the Spirit, are we to be perfected in the flesh?" We believe God. God wants us to live in absolute dependence on Him. By faith we believe God to raise up a greater testimony and ministry, to bring more people into His Kingdom, and to send out more to preach, teach, and serve. We believe God for the funds, facilities, and whatever it takes to do the work He wants us to do. God has always proven Himself faithful to do what He desires to perform. People can get upset over many things, but I can't get upset over them when I know that everything is under God's control.

b) The building blocks (vv. 5b-7)

(1) VirtueThe Greek word translated "virtue" is aret[ma]e, and is rarely used in the Bible. But it is commonly used in secular Greek, and refers to excellence or the proper fulfillment of something. The best thing a knife can do is cut something. The best thing a horse can do is run fast. And the best thing a Christian can do is to be like Christ. So a believer should add to his life of faith the excellence of Christlikeness.

(2) KnowledgeHere Peter uses a different word than epigin[ma]sis, the deep knowledge of salvation (vv. 3-4). Instead he uses gn[ma]osis, which is practical wisdom. A believer should add to his faith excellence and apply it practically. Some people have all the biblical data, but they don't live the Christian life. True knowledge is acted out.

(3) Self-controlSelf-control means to control our passions, rather than being controlled by them. We break the will of sin by self-discipline. When I returned home from the sabbatical, I received a phone call from a dear friend telling me of a pastor I know who destroyed his ministry, credibility, and life through a relationship with a young girl. My first reaction was to be furious with the pastor for doing that. But then I stopped that response and replaced it with self-control. The resources are available to us to be disciplined. We must bring all things into captivity to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

(4) PatienceWe are to persevere with courage against all odds. Many people flourish in their Christian walk at the beginning, but fall back as soon as they hit some resistance. When you can go right through any difficulty and stand courageously against Satan's attacks and the world's opposition, then you've got the never-give-in, never-give-up kind of persistence.

(5) GodlinessThe Greek word translated "godliness" is eusebeia, which means "reverence" or "worship." Godliness is a life of worship. David said, "I have set the Lord always before me" (Ps. 16:8). I'm saddened about America. As I traveled to different churches I saw little worship. There were lots of programs and routines of ministry, but little reverence of God. When I preached messages on the glory of God or worship, people would say to me, "We never knew that." Someone expressed the fear that Grace Church was becoming too much like a business with all kinds of policies and programs. If we are, God help us. We will wake up as the church in Sardis--the dead church. We must remember to set the Lord before us and worship him.

(6) Brotherly kindnessThe phrase "brotherly kindness" is a translation of the Greek word philadelphia. The best way to translate it is "friendship." We're to be affectionate to one another. One of my greatest fears is that people might come to church and sit on the fringes without developing any relationships. They come to hear the preacher and listen to the music and then go their way. Don't do that. Add friendships to your faith.

(a) Defining discipleshipFor some reason, many people think there is a great mystery surrounding discipleship. Many churches want to know more about discipleship, like it's some secret program. But discipleship is very simple: it's nothing more than a friendship with a spiritual perspective. Discipleship occurs when two people are molded together in deep affection with a spiritual perspective. The conversation between disciples is about God, not the weather. Discipleship involves pouring our lives into other people. Build friendships. And don't limit yourself to a small group and keep everyone else out.

(b) Displaying friendshipWhen I was in Delaware I talked to a pastor who attended one of our shepherd's conferences. I asked him what stood out in his mind about the conference. He said, "The love of the people for each other. I was drawn to tears when I sensed them worshiping God in the midst of genuine love." Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Have you forgotten to build friendships?

(7) LoveLove is a selfless sacrifice on behalf of one another. During our three-month sabbatical we had a verse for our trip: "In honor, preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10). With four kids

in one van for ninety days hassling over where to sit, it is necessary to have a verse like that! And we enforced it. That's the way life ought to be.

Conclusion

Have you forgotten the reality of your salvation? Are you thankful for it? Have you forgotten the riches of your salvation? Are you seeing the power of God expressed in your life? Have you forgotten your responsibility to add moral excellence, practical wisdom, self-control, courageous perseverance, God-conscious reverence, friendship, and sacrificial love to your faith? Be reminded of each because if you forget, the consequence are tragic.

Focusing on the Facts

1. How can the brain become an enemy?
2. Describe the elements that made the ministry of the church of Ephesus so great (Rev. 2:2-3, 6).
3. How did the church at Ephesus fail (Rev. 2:4)?
4. What did Christ tell the church to Ephesus to do in Revelation 2:5?
5. What is the source of that which pertains to life and godliness in the believer?
6. What did Peter mean by life and godliness in verse 3?
7. How can we stifle God's plan for reaching the world?
8. Explain how glory and virtue is a parallel concept to life and godliness.
9. What's to blame in the case of a believer who lacks a godly and virtuous life?
10. What kind of promises does God have for believers (2 Pet. 2:4)?
11. Describe the paradox of the believer's salvation.
12. What is the basic ingredient in the Christian life? Explain.
13. What are the building blocks of the Christian life? Explain each one.
14. Define discipleship.

Pondering the Principles

1. According to Revelation 2:4, the church at Ephesus lost their first love. Have you lost your first love? Has your service for Christ become mechanical? If you answered yes to those questions, then you need to remember the warmth and thrill you had when Christ first came into your life. Then you need to repent of your loveless service for Christ. Finally, repeat the things you did as a new believer: study God's Word, meet with other Christians, pray, and share Christ with unbelievers. As you do those things you will recapture your first love.
2. Second Peter 1:3 says we have been given all things pertaining to life and godliness. That means we have been given everything that's necessary for living the Christian life. Instead of praying for things you already have, begin to appropriate those things in your life. For example, the next time you have the opportunity to share the gospel with an unbeliever, ask God to apply His strength and His words in your witness. Then go and do it. Only as you move out in faith will God release the provisions you need to act on His behalf.
3. Review the building blocks of faith (see pp. 8-10). Based on the definitions of each, think about how each ingredient relates to the previous ingredient. For example, how might knowledge depend on virtue, or how might self-control depend on knowledge? Why do you think Peter put love at the end of the list? Where are you in the building-block process? Review the seven building blocks in terms of your Christian walk. In which areas do you need to make the most improvement? Remember, be diligent to add those things to your faith!

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