

Our passage today begins with the expression, "For this very reason..." So we should review last week's passage to learn the reason Peter is referring to. There we learned that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. He provides that need through our knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and excellence. The glory and excellence (virtue or goodness) of God gave us very great and precious promises through which we participate in God's nature and escape the corruption in the world that springs from evil desires.

This is a packed declaration. Let me attempt to put it in other words to help us get ahold of what Peter is declaring. - God has given us who believe all that we need to live a godly life. He provides this through our knowledge of God who is glorious and the very definition of goodness. Those qualities of glory and goodness are the reason He gives you the promises in the Word. The promises give you the transforming power to take on His very nature as you break free from the enslaving desires of the flesh.

This is what is needed to live in the Last Days. Because the Scriptures declare that there will be a falling away (2Thessalonians 2:3), and that the days will become increasingly evil (2Timothy 3:13), and Jesus wondered if at His return there would even be faith on the earth (Luke 18:8), we who believe need to be divinely empowered to take on the very virtues of God. How else will we stand in this fallen world? (Ephesians 6:13)

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, Peter is listing for us communicable attributes. Some would tell us not use theological words because they don't communicate. I refuse to dumb down the sermon. We're going to smarten up instead. Our whole culture is dumbing down, but we are children of the light. (1Thessalonians 5:5) We don't need to follow the culture's lazy pattern. If you are witnessing to someone, then use language they understand. If you are sharing with a believer, use accurate language and explain it if necessary. Let's wise up, not dumb down!

Communicable is different from the word attainable. These virtues that Peter will list are part of the divine nature in which the very great and precious promises enable us to participate. We don't attain to them, for that implies we somehow do it on our own. They are communicated to us. We share in the very virtues of God as we come to know God.

That does not mean we become gods or in any way take on the eternal and infinite nature of God. He is the Creator and had no beginning. We are merely created beings with limited capacity. **He does, however, want to share with us all the good within Himself,** all that He designed us to receive, which are His communicable attributes.

Commented [notes1]: 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (ESV)

³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Commented [notes2]: 2 Timothy 3:13 (ESV)

¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Commented [notes3]: Luke 18:8 (ESV)

⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Commented [notes4]: Ephesians 6:13 (ESV)

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Commented [notes5]: 1 Thessalonians 5:5 (ESV)

⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

Because we participate in His divine nature, Peter tells us to make every effort to supplement our faith with virtue. (Philippians 4:8) To make every effort in Greek includes the meaning of **being zealous about adding these virtues with a sense of urgency**. These are the Last Days. We can't be slothful in our spiritual life. This is a topic of eternal consequence.

Now we have what seems to be a contradiction. The attributes of God are shared with us, and yet Peter tells us to make every effort to add them to our faith. I have had many an argument over whether we make any effort or not in our Christian life. Some emphasize the fact that we simply receive and that it is God who does the work. (Philippians 2:13) That is true. However, I'm sure that if you are honest, you will recall many times in which you as a believer had to make an effort to receive from God. You had to make an effort to ignore your flesh and your old desires and submit to the will of God. (Colossians 3:5)

Let me give you my own example. Today after the service, I have some ministry to do. When the person called, I tried to find other people to do it. When the Spirit of God said I was the one that was supposed to do it, well, quite frankly, I complained at first. I had to make an effort to remember the blessing that comes from giving. I had to make every effort to surrender to the Lord's good will. Even Jesus had to pray, "Not my will but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42) It wasn't because He had a fallen nature, but rather that man must make an effort to die to himself and continually surrender his will to God.

What you want to do is not necessarily evil. It may be a good thing. But the question is really this, "What does God want you to do?" Are we here to serve or to be served? If we are here to take on the attributes of Christ, then we should be here to serve. (Mark 10:45)

Even though these attributes of God are freely given, we must make every effort to supplement our faith with them. Our faith says that God has redeemed us through Jesus and made us a new creation in Him. (2Corinthians 5:17) It says we are no longer in bondage to the corruption of this world. (Romans 6:11-12) That is our starting point.

Now we go on from there by adding virtue. This is the same word that was used in verse 3. God called us by His glory and excellence or virtue. NIV translates the word goodness in both cases. To be virtuous is to be good like God is good to us. Our partaking in the divine nature begins with faith, but then we must see that this faith is manifest in every area of our life with the life of Jesus. This word also has a richer meaning it Greek. **Excellence is a divinely endowed ability to excel in heroic, courageous deeds**. It is selfless as opposed to our old life that was selfish. Old patterns that are not virtuous must be changed. (Romans 6:13-14)

Paul lists some of the behavioral changes that need to take place. Anger must be replaced with gentleness. (Ephesians 4:26) Unforgiveness and malice must be replaced

Commented [notes6]: Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Commented [notes7]: Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Commented [notes8]: Colossians 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Commented [notes9]: Luke 22:42 (ESV)

⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Commented [notes10]: Mark 10:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Commented [notes11]: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Commented [notes12]: Romans 6:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Commented [notes13]: Romans 6:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Commented [notes14]: Ephesians 4:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

with love and mercy. (Ephesians 5:31-32) In one sense, this first addition to our faith sums up all the others that follow, but also includes all godly qualities that are not mentioned.

Peter goes on to tell us to supplement *virtue with knowledge*. As we go through this list of additions to our faith, remember that they are all things that Christ exemplified. If we are to show others Jesus in our life, we need to be like Christ in these areas. How did Christ demonstrate knowledge? He knew the Word of God. (Luke 4:4) He knew the debates in the rabbinical world. He had an answer from Scripture. (Mark 7:11-13) We need to know the debates going on in the world we live in so that we can search for the answer we should present from the Word of God. Of course the Spirit guided Jesus to the Scripture that was most applicable, but without knowledge of the Word, we are limited as to what He can bring to our mind. The Word equips us with discernment. We need the mind of Christ to respond to the situations we face each day. The Word gives us a Christ like mind.

⁶ and knowledge with self-control, Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:23) It doesn't matter how strong your faith is, or how much of the Scriptures you know if you do not have self-control. People will push your buttons and your anger or impatience will disqualify everything you have said. The word that is used here also can mean patience or endurance. It was used of the focus that dedicated athletes had in training. We often must patiently endure in a conversation to get the opportunity to share the knowledge of the eternal word. Sometimes we must patiently endure insults.

Self-control is its own message. It says to others that you have another Master. It declares that you have victory over your old nature. Once again, we see the ultimate example of self-control in Jesus. In Peter's first letter he described this virtue in Jesus. *²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* 1 Peter 2:23 (ESV) The key to this virtue of self-control is trust in the One who judges justly.

In our dealings with the lost we have to keep in mind that our battle is not with flesh and blood. We are standing against opinions and arguments that are raised against the knowledge of God. (2Corinthians 10:5) It is not about you. That is the mindset we must have when we are tempted to lose control. It's a spiritual battle over the truth. Our opponents are blinded and in bondage, just as we once were. (2Corinthians 4:4) Let the Holy Spirit equip you with self-control.

and self-control with steadfastness, NIV translates this next virtue as perseverance. Throughout the Old Testament, God's love is referred to as steadfast love. (Psalm 13:5) It is an unchanging and unshakeable love. It is a persevering love. We need this steadiness in our faith and in all the virtues. An inconsistent testimony is a weak

Commented [notes15]: Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV)

³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Commented [notes16]: Luke 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

Commented [notes17]: Mark 7:11-13 (ESV)

¹¹ But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban" - (that is, given to God) - ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Commented [notes18]: Galatians 5:23 (ESV)

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Commented [notes19]: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Commented [notes20]: 2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Commented [notes21]: Psalm 13:5 (ESV)

⁵ But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

testimony. How can people believe that Christ transforms when you are one way one day and another the next?

Yielding to compromise or pushing the boundaries of grace is a dangerous path to walk. (Romans 6:1) Some people want to see how much they can enjoy of both worlds. They haven't seen how destructive sin really is. Wavering is a sign of spiritual immaturity. We all stumble and experience setbacks, but habitual indulgence in the same sin is either a sign that the person is yet to be converted, or that they have not allowed Christ to set them free from that sin because they still believe the lie that it will somehow satisfy.

Think about it. If God has given us everything we need for life and godliness, and you still indulge regularly in some sin, you have not agreed with God regarding that sin's destructiveness. You would never take poison that would kill you even if you believed that it would totally satisfy you. Our problem, like the example of the Israelites, is that we just don't believe God's opinion of a particular sin. If they believed murmuring was going to end in death by poisonous snakes or the earth opening up and swallowing them, they would do everything possible not to open their mouth with a murmuring statement. (Numbers 21:6) Our problem is our unbelief. We are not steadfast. It is also described as being double-minded. (James 1:8)

Jesus was steadfast! In every situation, every confrontation, in joy or pain, He never changed regardless of the cost to Himself. His virtues were consistent. He never failed to express the character of God. (Hebrews 4:15)

and steadfastness with godliness, Virtuous and godly seem to have little difference. It is almost repetition. The Old Testament often used similar words to emphasize a single point. The difference is that this word emphasizes **the proper honor, adoration and reverence for God, including the acts of worship that should accompany it.** (1Timothy 4:8) This is a matter of our heart's focus. These virtues are not only outward expressions of an inner change, but also the inner expression of that change. It is expressed in worshiping with other believers and privately, times of prayer and meditation in the Scriptures. Without the inner change, the outer will not last. If my heart is not godly, my actions will eventually display my heart.

It is in knowing God through His Word and His Spirit that we come to that proper honor, adoration and reverence. When we know Him, we can't help but honor and adore Him. You can't even begin to know Him without salvation through Jesus. Once again, Jesus exemplified this like no one else could. He only said and did what He heard from His Father. He lived a life of reverent respect, honor and adoration. His acts of worship permeated all that He did and said. His life was an act of worship. Oh to be more like Him! (1Timothy 4:8)

⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, Look how Jesus loved those the Father had given Him. He loved them to the end. He served them with the words they needed. He

Commented [notes22]: Romans 6:1 (ESV)

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

Commented [notes23]: Numbers 21:6 (ESV)

⁶ Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.

Commented [notes24]: James 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Commented [notes25]: Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Commented [notes26]: 1 Timothy 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

gave them His time. He laid down His life. Greater love has no man than that. (John 15:13)

There is a special command for us to love the brothers. (Galatians 6:10; 1John 3:14) Of course we are to love all, but we are to have a unique love for the family of God because they are the body of Christ. (1John 5:1) That love is expressed in many ways, as we see in the life of Christ. One of the ways most honored by God is to share the words of life. (Luke 12:42-43) We are to encourage one another. (Hebrews 10:25) This love also takes on very practical aspects, visiting the lonely, meals for those in need, financial and other physical assistance. The season in which we live gives us the opportunity to help the body of Christ that is suffering around the world. And of course we should not forget the power of praying for each other as an expression of our love for one another. (Ephesians 6:18)

The church has done such a poor job of loving one another in our American culture. Church splits and competition have caused many to give up on seeing the Biblical church become a reality. Let us never give in to the selfishness and pride of man that causes such a poor testimony. Add to your godliness brotherly affection!

and brotherly affection with love. To all these attributes of God, add agape love. This is a love that expects nothing in return. It sees beyond what is now to the person God is making. The brother you are at odds with today will one day be a glorious Christ like being that, if you could see them completed, you would be tempted to worship them. We are made in the image of God. Christ died for each and every one. To not live in love is to not know God, for God is love. (1John 4:8) Paul tells us that love should cover all virtues. (Colossians 3:14)

Now listen to how Peter wraps up the necessity of increasing in these attributes. *⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And contrast this promise with the warning for those who are not adding these virtues to their faith. *⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.* So we must ask which of these verses describes our life. Are you living as you should for these Last Days? When He appears, will you be overjoyed or ashamed? (Daniel 12:2) Are you yielding to the Spirit's prompting to add these godly qualities to your life, or have you forgotten that you have been cleansed from former sins? (Revelation 3:17) It's one or the other. Peter doesn't describe a middle ground.

These are the Last Days. Let us be zealous with a sense of urgency to add these attributes of Jesus to our faith. May they be seen in our lives so that our knowledge of Jesus might make us effective and fruitful for His glory!

Commented [notes27]: John 15:13 (ESV)

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Commented [notes28]: Galatians 6:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Commented [notes29]: 1 John 3:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

Commented [notes30]: 1 John 5:1 (ESV)

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

Commented [notes31]: Luke 12:42-43 (ESV)

⁴² And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

Commented [notes32]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)

²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Commented [notes33]: Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Commented [notes34]: 1 John 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Commented [notes35]: Colossians 3:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Commented [notes36]: Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Commented [notes37]: Revelation 3:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Questions

- 1 What are communicable attributes?
- 2 What is the seeming contradiction about adding to our faith?
- 3 Can you desire a good thing that is not God's will?
- 4 What is virtue?
- 5 What is knowledge?
- 6 Why is self-control so important?
- 7 What is steadfast? Why is it necessary?
- 8 What is godliness?
- 9 What is the difference between brotherly kindness and love?
- 10 What is the promise?
- 11 What is the warning?