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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 31, 2016
4th Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Daniel 5:17-30; John 7:14-17

Hymns: 351; 394; 398; 377:10 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1:1-11

Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the
righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God
and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all
things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of
Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given
to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these
you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the
corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your
faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to
self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness
brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these
things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor
unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who
lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has
forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and
election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the
everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: It is so easy to neglect important things

I promise myself to get proper exercise. I know the benefits, but after a time it slips and I neglect exercise. Perhaps for another individual it's keeping a budget, or maintaining a healthy diet. Maybe for another it's keeping in touch with people we care about, or keeping up with organization of important papers. Whatever it is in your life, most of us are not disciplined enough not to find ourselves neglecting something important in life. In these opening verses of Peter's second general epistle the most important thing in life. We are reminded:

THEME: Don't Neglect Your Own Salvation.

It is easy to take salvation for granted, after all --

**I. God Has Given Us All Things Pertaining to Life
and Godliness.**

The Lord has given us our faith. Peter begins this epistle to Christians everywhere with this observation regarding the grace of God.

2 Peter 1:1 "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."

Sometimes we almost skip over the address of the epistles as if they tell us very little. We should be more

careful to consider the truth expressed in these words. Yes, Peter is addressing this epistle to people who have obtained the faith, but that is saying a lot more than “to believers everywhere.” Peter makes the point that the blessing of faith came to us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. It is good for us not only to know but to say that Jesus is our God and our Savior. It was His righteousness that made it possible for us to be saved. It was through His righteousness communicated to us by the Holy Spirit in the gospel that we were brought to faith. One other little word for us to observe - Peter reminds us that this faith is **precious**. Precious things are rare and are not to be treated carelessly or neglected. God gave us a very precious gift in the gift of faith. I pray that we all appreciate how rare and precious this gift is. Consider the blessings faith brings:

2 Peter 1:2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Grace and peace are multiplied to us. God pours out grace and peace upon us, even though we are undeserving sinners. Grace and peace just keeps on coming in our direction, not because we are so smart, and not because we are so good, but through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. The truth about Jesus that you hold in mind and heart is so much more dynamic than a set a memorized facts taken from a school text book. It is through this truth regarding the person of Jesus Christ, who He really is both as true God and true Man, and what He has done on our behalf by His holy life and His innocent sufferings and death, it is through this

knowledge that God imparts to you His peace and every blessing for eternal life.

In the coming verse, notice the superlative in the description of what we have waiting for us. It is all through Jesus' glory as Savior --

2 Peter 1:4 “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.”

Not just great promises, but *exceedingly* great and precious promises are presented to you by God through faith in Christ Jesus. He talks about partaking of the divine nature. No, we will not become gods, or become a part of God, but we will dwell in His glory, and we will be perfected in glory because we will see Him as He is! No taint of sin shall remain. No remnant of sin's curse will plague us any longer. We shall live in eternal bliss and glory before the Lord.

God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness! Having escaped the corruption that is in this world with all the world's evil desires, God grants us all we need to possess eternal life, and eternal life that begins now as we live and breathe in this life.

That is what has been given to us by grace through faith for Jesus' sake, and it is precious, so how should you treat this precious gift of saving faith?

The world tells us that we only go around once in this life so we should get all we can out of it, and have a really good time, after all whoever dies with the most toys wins,

right? That is hardly the response of one who understands how precious and rare a gift has been given us in our faith in Jesus. The Lord has given us all we need to live a Christian life so --

II. Give all Diligence to Build on this Foundation.

2 Peter 1: 5-8 “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A thankful Christian doesn't sit back on his laurels simply saying, “Well thank you Lord, now that I've got it made, I'll see you later when I'm done living my life my way.” No, because we live in a corrupt world, and the Lord has made our escape from this corruption, we build our lives on this precious gift of faith and salvation. We build with **diligence**. It is so easy for our spiritual life to become a little more “hit and miss” than it should be, especially during the week. Our prayer life, our devotional life, our sanctified living all suffer from time to time, because life is so busy. This neglect can easily become a pattern, and there are always things on our “to do” lists, and fun things to do and people to see. Priorities are set, whether we realize it or not. Spiritual diligence means that we set **spiritual** priorities that build us up in our faith life.

If we build our knowledge base with the regular reading of Holy Scriptures and reception of the means of grace, we will experience growth in our daily Christian life. I

know because I've seen it in my own life. Self-control, that is the subjection of the flesh to the Spirit, and the strength to persevere against the pressures of the world, will be evident. Flowing from this will also be the growth in Christian love and kindness. Fruits of faith will abound to the praise and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The Apostle also reminds us that the opposite is also true. When we neglect things spiritual these benefits will be missing from our lives along with the corresponding fruits. And sadly, I've seen this in my own life also. We may see material and social growth as a result of our dedication to things material and temporal, but what does that indicate. Peter writes in our text:

2 Peter 1:9 “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”

Shortsighted. Almost by definition humans are shortsighted. Humans are into instant gratification aren't we? That is what Peter is talking about. We may see earthly benefits that make us happy for a time, but if these things are for this life only what have we gained in the end. We dare not be so shortsighted. Some poor spiritual choices may make this life easier; other better spiritual choices may be downright inconvenient now, but pay off with the growth of faith that bring us God's abundant grace and blessing. The Apostle Paul also reminds us of the importance of allowing spiritual things to predominate.

Galatians 6:7-10 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.
⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap

corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

“Sowing one’s wild oats” is not beneficial. If we sow to the flesh we will reap corruption! If we sow to the spirit, we will from the Spirit reap everlasting life. Diligence is encouraged. Don’t grow weary of the struggle of faith. Don’t grow weary of doing good thinking there is nothing in it for me, while the world offers me so much. Really? Think again. Don’t lose heart. Do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith. And the Lord presents us ample opportunities to do just that. That is why we are here to glorify God in our lives and show forth His love to the brethren and the world.

Peter is encouraging us to direct our life focus on our spiritual lives. It is important for us to --

III. Be More Diligent To Make Your Calling and Election Sure.

Yes, it is God who has called us to faith, and it is by God’s grace and power that we are preserved in true faith. However, we also know how God works in us. So with that understanding we read Peter’s words of exhortation.

2 Peter 1:10-11 “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;¹¹ for so an entrance

will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Peter is assuring us that if we are diligent to grow in virtue which only comes to us in Jesus’ righteousness, if we are diligent to grow in knowledge of the truth, we will **not stumble**. This is of course speaking of stumbling in the faith, in falling into sin and impenitence. Quite the contrary happens in and for us as we remain diligent in our spiritual lives. God in His grace and power supplies us with an open door to heaven. We will be granted admittance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is the one who called us to be saved. God is the one who chose us for salvation. What we possess in our hearts is the confidence that this salvation is ours as the Lord strengthens us through the hearing of the gospel. He makes our salvation sure, we possess the certainty of this salvation in our hearts as we walk in His ways and live in love one toward another. To the praise and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ who redeemed us to God.

“Faith clings to Jesus Christ alone
And rests in Him unceasing
And by its fruits true faith is known,
With faith and love increasing.
Yet faith alone doth justify,
Works serve thy neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living.”

(TLH 377:9)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.