

Striving For a Godly Life

2Peter 1:1-11

Football fans will probably know the name Kurt Warner.

He is a hall of fame quarterback who won the league MVP twice, was the MVP of Super Bowl 34, and went to the super bowl two more times once being with a different team.

He had what most football folks would call an incredible career, but it did not start out that way.

He was not able to attend a division one college and ended up at the University of Northern Iowa where he did not earn the starting quarterback job until his fifth and last year at the school.

He didn't make it into the NFL draft and when he tried out for the Green Bay Packers he ended up being cut by the team.

With his football prospects looking dim and needing to make a living he took a job at a grocery store stocking shelves and bagging groceries for \$5.50 per hour.

After six months of that he got the chance to play in the arena football league and after some success was able to sign a deal with the St. Louis Rams.

The Rams sent him to Europe to play for their farm team and again he found success.

When that year was done he made it onto the Rams as a third string quarterback but on account an injury to the starter and some management decisions he got a chance to be the starting quarterback of an NFL team.

The year he was named the starter he took the Rams from a record of 4-12 to a record of 13-3 and they won the super bowl.

He went from stocking shelves in a grocery store to winning the super bowl and being named the MVP in the span of about six years.

It is a story of hard work and determination.

A story about relentlessly striving toward a goal and getting to enjoy the success of that work.

My favorite part to the story is that Warner claims to have become a born again Christian in and around the time of ending up at the grocery store.

I heard him in an interview once talk about being at the store and how it was not what he wanted and how he hoped to not be there long, but for as long as he had to be there he resolved to be the best grocery store worker he could possibly be.

He figured out that life's most important goal wasn't throwing a football, but it was seeking to glorify God in everything.

I've often heard people say if you work hard and don't give up you can achieve whatever you want.

I believe that is a lie in terms of worldly achievement.

Lots of people work hard and fall short of making their dream a reality.

Christianity does not teach a pie in the sky philosophy like that.

It does teach us, however, about the value of striving for a goal.

It does teach us that if we are striving for the right goal in our lives then none of the failures we experience in this world are wasted.

It does teach us that if we are striving for the right goal it will be realized more and more each day and will be fully realized in eternity.

[The goal that we are called to strive for is godliness. This morning we are beginning a journey through the book of 2Peter. I've entitled this series, "Safeguards for Life" because the theme of this letter is Peter's desire to see believers kept from spiritual danger. The first safeguard that he encourages us towards is striving for a godly life. In the first eleven verses of the book he gives us four important lessons concerning such an effort. First, he shows us that...]

Point #1 – Faith must precede striving for godliness. (Verses 1-2)

No one can ever be right with God based on what they do. That is solely based on what a person believes with regard to the person and work of Jesus Christ. If we fail to start there everything we do is absolutely useless.

This letter opens by telling us who it is from, who it is going to, and a short blessing upon the recipients.

This greeting, like most in the New Testament, does something more than give us information about people, it tells us some important things about God and how these people relate to Him.

That is clear as soon as the author introduces himself (1a).

I like the fact that Peter has the word 'servant' first.

This is servant in the sense of a slave. He sees Himself as owned by Jesus Christ. He sees himself as obligated by that ownership to obey His Master.

It is a statement of humility. He is nothing great in his own eyes, he is merely a slave.

As a 'servant' he is an 'apostle' of Jesus.

The word apostle means one sent under authority. He is claiming to be personally appointed by Jesus to speak on His behalf.

It is Peter's way of saying his message to the readers of this letter comes with the authority of the LORD.

Verse 1 goes on to tell us who the letter is to. (Verse 1b)

That is pretty amazing! Here is someone who was personally appointed by the king of the universe and he is saying that the faith of regular believers is just as good as his own.

Their sins are washed just as clean as his and they are just as right with God as he is because the object of their faith is the same person, Jesus Christ.

Amazing! He goes on in **verse 2**.

When he speaks here of grace and peace being multiplied to the believer he likely has in mind their experience of it.

It is one thing to have a surface level understanding of what it means to receive God's grace is in another to appreciate more and more the riches of His glorious grace.

It is one thing to understand that we have peace with God on account of Jesus it is another to truly rest in that peace from day to day.

Faith is the beginning of that experience and so before Peter gives the commands beginning in verse 3 he reminds his readers that we are people of faith.

[Have you ever heard something ask, "What came first the chicken or the egg"? The answer from a biblical worldview and from experience and observation is obvious. The chicken came first. You can read the bible's answer in Genesis 1 and you can go to anyone who raises chickens and ask for an egg and set it somewhere where the egg is totally on its own and see if anything hatches. Nothing will and that is with a fully formed egg never mind an egg forming from who knows what all on its own. Clearly the chicken comes first.]

It is the same with faith.

It is impossible to do anything of any value unless faith comes first.

Someone might say, "Wait a minute non-Christian people can do good things."

That is true non-Christian people can do morally good things, but I ask who gave them the ability and the resources to do those things?

God did. So if someone does something that appears good without acknowledging God they are automatically a liar and idolater which makes their good action evil.

[Faith has to come first. We must first be made right with God and forgiven for everything we have done wrong and that happens by believing Jesus died for us and that God the Father raised Him from the dead. We must understand fully that nothing we ever do puts us in right standing with God whether it happens before or after we put our faith in Jesus. If we mess that up then striving for godliness will do us no good and likely make us miserable. If we get that right, then we are ready to see this second lesson which is that...]

Point #2 – God provides everything necessary to strive for godliness. (Verses 3-4)

Every single person who truly trusts Christ as their saviour has been provided, by Almighty God, all that they need to live for Him in this world.

Just like the first two verses Peter's focus here is on the Lord (Verse 3).

Since verse 2 ends with the mention Jesus, it seems to make the most sense to say that the His at the beginning of verse 3 is also referring to Jesus.

If that is correct then the 'him' mentioned at the end of the verse is likely referring to God the Father as the one 'who called us to his own glory and excellence'.

So the idea of the verse is that because the Christian has come to know God who calls His people towards His 'glory and excellence' Jesus has exercised His power to give to all that believe in Him everything that is necessary to live a godly life in this world.

Notice He calls this power 'divine' meaning that Jesus, as God the Son, has the same amount of power as God the Father.

We should ask, "How much power does God have?"

According to the Bible He is 'all-powerful' meaning He can do all that He pleases.

There is nothing that God wants to do that He cannot do.

If Jesus can do all that He pleases and He has used His power to give His people all they need for "life and godliness", then we must have all we need for 'life and godliness'.

To that Peter adds this in verse 4.

In addition to supplying us with everything we need for godliness He has granted to us His 'promises' which are described here as "precious" and "very great".

Every promise in the Bible to the people of God depends on the power of God and therefore is absolutely certain.

What are those promises? Looking at the big picture I would say Peter is talking about the promise that the people of God will inherit the whole of the new creation where there will be no more sin and we will enjoy the visible glory of God to our maximum ability as human beings completely free from sin forever.

That, I believe, is what he means by saying through the promises believers "become partakers of the divine nature".

He is not saying we become like God in every way.

We will never be all-knowing, all-powerful, present everywhere, self-existent, and alike.

He is talking about being like the LORD in terms of His moral nature.

That goal will be realized in eternity, but Jesus has given us all that we need to pursue it even now.

Just to name three, according to His power the LORD has sent the Holy Spirit, He has given His written Word, and He has given us the fellowship of other believers.

No Christian can say to God, “Lord you have failed to give me what I need to live for you in this world!”

[Over the years I have assembled many things. Toys, tools, and furniture. Every time I open a box to assemble something the first thing I look for are the instructions. Each step in the instructions tells you what pieces and parts are needed. As long as I follow the instructions and the box has all the required pieces then the assembly will get completed.]

That is true for the Christian striving to live a godly life and this text is saying that the power of Jesus has ‘granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness’.

There is no shortage and there are no missing pieces.

Do you know what that means? It means any excuse we may come up with for failing to strive for godliness is just that, an excuse.

We have no good reason to neglect this in our lives.

When we say things like, “I don’t have time” or “I won’t ever get there so why bother” or “I’m better than the average person so I’m good enough” or any other excuse that we can think up we are denying the power of Christ in our lives.

[It goes without saying that is something we should avoid as believers. Our lives are supposed to testify to the power of Christ in the world and He has given us all that we need towards that goal. That forms the basis for what Peter says next. Having put things in their proper order he is now ready to give a command to believers and the command gives us this third lesson which is that...]

Point #3 – Striving for godliness leads to godliness. (Verses 5-9)

It is through putting effort into the pursuit of holy life that we grow in our holiness.

Look with me at the first few words of verse 5, it says, “For this very reason”.

Because the power of Christ has provided everything you need to strive for godliness then you should do this... **Verse 5-7.**

It is important to take a moment to understand the word ‘supplement’ here which the NIV and NKJ translate as ‘add to your faith’.

The NAS translates the phrase as “in your faith supply moral excellence.”

Commentator Michael Green makes a convincing argument that the word has the sense of “generous and costly cooperation.”

In other words this is the Christian response to the work of God in salvation.

It does not cause our right standing with God but it is the whole hearted embrace of what God has done to make us right with Him.

[Think of it like this. Imagine a person is paralyzed and has no ability to walk and a doctor is able to do ground breaking surgery to repair the damage and give the person the ability to walk. Will the person keep using a wheelchair? Of course not they will walk. Does their actual walking in any way diminish the fact that their ability to walk is 100% dependent on the operation? Not in the least.]

That is the idea Peter is driving at here. Making every effort for virtue does not take away from the fact that salvation is 100% the work of God, it embraces it.

The list the apostle gives here is successive meaning one thing builds on the other.

If you want moral excellence (virtue), you will pursue knowledge, as you gain knowledge you will pursue self-control.

Contrary to the common thinking in our world human beings have the capacity to deny our sinful desires. How much more is that true of a child of God indwelt by the Holy Spirit?

Self-control leads to 'steadfastness' or perseverance.

Perseverance leads to 'godliness' that is a deepening reverence for the LORD upon that we are to build 'brotherly love' that is an affection that seeks the highest good of other believers, and on that we build 'love' for all.

Verse 8 begins with the word 'For', in other words this is what will happen if we "make every effort for these things..." **Verse 8-9.**

If we make 'every effort' these things will be "increasing" in our lives and it will keep us from being "ineffective or unfruitful" in the Christian life.

If not then it will be as though we are "blind" and have "forgotten" that we were cleansed from our sins.

In other words it will be as though the work of God has no meaning or effect in our life.

How can that be? How can the power of God accomplish nothing?

That is impossible which means if these things are missing than God is NOT at work in you which means you are not saved.

You see striving for these things does not make you a Christian is simply reveals whether or not you are a Christian.

The power of God never fails so when we strive for these things by grace they are produced in our lives.

Just like a child makes progress in walking, talking, and learning by walking, talking, and

learning so too the Christian makes progress in striving for godliness by striving for godliness.

[Are we striving is the question this text raises. It is very easy to succumb to the notion of arm chair religion brothers and sisters. To think, “God has done it all and therefore nothing I do matters.” That is a terrible lie that does great harm to the church. Peter’s exhortation here is “God has done it all and therefore everything we do matters.” When we get that right it leads to an enormous blessing in our lives. Of all the things that we could want in this world this is by far the best thing we could ever have and it comes from striving for godliness. That is the fourth lesson from these verses. It is that...]

Point #4 – Striving for and maintaining godliness produces assurance. (Verses 10-11)

God neither wants us to presume entrance into His kingdom nor does He want us to be uncertain about it. Instead He wants our confidence in our salvation to be the result of seeing what salvation produces in our lives.

As he has done throughout these verses the apostle Peter puts the sovereignty of God—that is His absolute control over everything—and the responsibility of people side by side.

Look with me at the **first part of verse 10.**

The diligence that he is speaking of here is all the things that have just been talked about in verses 5-9.

He is saying keep at those things because by doing them you will “confirm your calling and election.”

By the term ‘election’ he means God’s choice before time began of whom He would exert His power to save them from their sins.

By the term ‘calling’ he means the moment in real time where God takes a person from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive so that they can believe on the person and work of Jesus and be saved from an eternity in hell.

If we understand those two terms correctly we will rightly see that we have nothing to do with that.

That is totally the work of God, so how can Peter say we should be diligent to ‘confirm’ those things.

Because Peter sees no conflict between the work of God and our response to it.

If God has done the work we will desire these things. If we desire these things it shows plainly that God has done and is doing His work.

Who benefits from that? We do as individual believers and the church as a whole.

God’s knowledge/confidence always remains the same.

It is our confidence and joy that grows in the pursuit of godliness.

[It is sort of like starting out as a gardener. You buy the seeds and put them in the ground, you may even mark which ones are which, and then you water and try and make sure the soil has everything it needs to grow the plant. If you do all that then the carrot seeds will produce carrots, tomato seeds will produce tomatoes, and so it is for everything that you plant. The seed produces the fruit according to what kind of seed it is.]

What should we think of the gardening skills of almighty God? Does He do a work of salvation in the heart of a person only to have it fail and produce nothing?

Not at all.

That is why he can say this in the second part of verse ten and eleven.

(Verse 10a-11).

That is an amazing promise brothers and sisters.

Consistently striving for godliness means “you will never fall.”

Talk about a safeguard for your life.

For as long as the church has existed there have been those who claim to believe in God for the salvation of their souls but then they fall away.

Why does that happen? It happens because they either never start or at some point they stop striving for holiness.

They become indifferent or even hostile to the LORD and turn away from what He desires for life which feeds their indifference or hostility even more leading to their fall.

Peter says, put up a safeguard in your life. Fight against indifference and strive for godliness.

He says, this is the means that the LORD has provided for entrance into His Kingdom.

It is a changed heart which produces a changed life which leads to an ever increasing desire for the goodness of God and His ways.

Striving does not create a changed heart, it reveals it.

That is why Peter begins with faith and follows that with the provision of God.

God brothers and sisters have given us all that we need; therefore, we must strive and in so doing grow in godliness and the assurance of our salvation.

Do you have this safeguard in your life today? I pray you do because it is truly an amazing gift for all that belong to Jesus.