

2 Peter 1 v 1 - 11

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[0 : 0 0] chapter 5 beginning at verse 16 and the title in the New International Version is Live by the Spirit. So I say live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature for the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature they are in conflict with each other so that you do not do what you want but if you are led by the Spirit you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious sexual immorality impurity and debauchery idolatry and witchcraft hatred discord jealous fits of rage selfish ambition dissensions factions and envy drunkenness orgies and the like I warn you as I did before that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God but the fruit of the

Spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self-control against such things there is no law those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit let us not become conceited provoking and envying each other amen and may the Lord bless his word to us it would be useful to have that passage from 2nd Peter in front of you as we come to think about what it has to say to us Peter was writing this epistle to a group of Christians who had two problems the first was that they were being persecuted which was common of course with many churches at that time but the second is there were false teachers who were in the church trying to teach another gospel and this was throwing these people into a state of confusion and so he writes to them and the title in my Bible for that with the majority of that first passage is making ones calling an election sure and clearly this is a topic that for every Christian is very important as we'll see as we go through at the outset he wants to make it absolutely clear the position that he's coming from he first states his own position that he's coming as a servant but also as an apostle of Jesus Christ in other words someone who has met this Lord that they serve and of course many of them wouldn't have met Jesus but would have only heard about him so Jesus is there in this first verse as you like the confirmation that Simon is one who can speak with authority as an apostle and he's writing to these Christians and he makes it clear again in the first verse there that he's not coming to speak to a group of Christians who are any different from anybody else and in particular he himself so although he's claiming the authority of an apostle he also makes it clear to these people that he's coming simply as another Christian a servant because he says to those who through the righteousness of God and our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received the faith as precious as ours in other words he knows these people have come to faith in Christ and that faith is as strong if you like as his own despite the fact that he's been in the privileged position of meeting the Lord he's not negating the fact that all those who trusted in Christ have that same faith that faith that comes from God and he makes the usual greeting at the end to them before he begins his text as it were and the instructions that he wants to give to them so this is a very practical letter at least at this stage in helping the people in this church the Christians there to as it were resist the error that's being introduced and also to be stronger in their own faith and

I'm going to begin because of the way that it's phrased in here we got that list of things that are to be added to faith I'm going to read you something which you might find objectionable but I'm going to read it anyway just imagine someone said this to you you're an evil ignorant godless unkind and hateful person how would you feel I'll repeat it you're an evil ignorant godless unkind and hateful person well in this passage Peter talks about those things from the positive side but the implication is that when you become a Christian it isn't automatic that you have these things because he says for this reason make every effort to add to your faith and then he goes through a list of things and what I've read out to you is what you have if you take the opposite view if you don't get these things because if we don't then we can be evil ignorant godless unkind and hateful and you could understand why people would be very upset if you call them that but here

Peter is calling these young Christians to take note of the positive qualities and to add them to their faith so tonight I just want to take a few moments to go through this particular passage and draw your attention to one or two things which come out of it not dealing with each one of these but just picking out one or two important ones and then applying those to what we know but the first thing he starts with just to make it absolutely clear he's making them think about how they can be sure that they truly are Christians to be sure that they've been called and that they elect and they're part of God's plan and so he reminds them of how this began because although he's talking about how you can grow as a Christian he begins by telling them where that growth began because the suggestion not just here but in every way you read it in the Bible is that at one time they were incapable of growth just

I'll read you a couple of passages which say this they'll be very well known to you first one's in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1 it says as for you you were dead in your transgressions and sins these people before they heard the message of salvation through Christ were dead in their sins those sins those transgressions you truly could say that that list I read out would apply to them hateful unkind all those things and then Paul reiterates this in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 4 when he says but because of his great love for us God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions it is by grace you have been saved and so Peter says where they started with this Christian life it was because verse 3 his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness we did nothing he called us the Lord Jesus Christ called us to repent and trust in him through these he's given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires just think about that for a minute just think about these Christians and the false teachers who were making them question their faith how would that appear to them listen to those words so that we may might participate in the divine nature does it feel like we're participating in the divine nature this evening sometimes it seems so far away doesn't it because we're so conscious of our own sinfulness and no doubt these people because they were in a bit of chaos with his false teaching would have been questioning whether they were

[10:10] Christians at all they'd look at their own lives and say but I don't feel as if I've got any part of the divine nature it would have been something that they would be questioning all the time but the other interesting use of words in these first few verses is in verse 4 it says through these he's given us his very great and precious promises now we could spend all the next year going through the Bible and finding the promises that Jesus made does anybody know how many he did make well if you believe the internet I looked them up the other day and there was something like 211 so we haven't got time to deal with them tonight I just want to read out one which you might believe is the most important it's certainly the one which encapsulates most of the others so this is a precious promise from Jesus the words of Jesus himself and as you know in some Bibles these are printed in red so that we know it's Jesus who spoke them and here's what it says in John chapter 6 verse 40 for my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day that's a promise that's a precious promise that is a very great and precious promise and of course we know that God's word is yea and amen it's not just a promise it's not just mere words this is something that will happen for all those who look to the son and believe in him that's where the Christian life starts let's not forget about that and this is what Peter's saying to these

Christians don't forget where it all started the Lord made us a promise that if we trust in him then we will have eternal life and we will be raised up at the last day that's where it started everything I'm going to tell you from now on is based on that fact if you don't know this what I'm going to say next will be wasted because only with that faith given by God can we go on and look at these things which he's going to tell us about and there are two reasons he's telling them this he tells us the first at the end of verse four says that you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires in other words this is a protection for the Christian if the man or woman of God one who's born again one who's called by him follows through some of these things that he's talking about then it will help them to escape the corruption in this world and all of us know what that corruption can do to people whatever form it takes but the second thing that he wants to tell them this for is in verse 10 therefore my brothers be all more eager to make your calling in election sure for if you do these things you will never fall you receive a rich welcome into the eternal

kingdom of our

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and then if you like for good measure he mentions something else because in verse 8 he says that if we manage to do these things which he's going to suggest to us then it will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ think what that means it means that it's possible to be a Christian but live your whole life being totally unproductive doing nothing for God doing things which are ineffective for the furtherance of God's kingdom it doesn't mean that we won't be saved because God's made his promise if we trust in him he will save us but it's possible to go through the whole of your Christian life being ineffective and unproductive and he's basically saying to these

Christians look if you follow these false prophets and if you get too put off by the persecution and corruption that comes from the world then you will never be productive for the kingdom for the kingdom of God and so he introduces this list verse 5 for this very reason make every effort to add to your faith and then he gives us this list and it's not just a list which is a few things that he's put together this is God's inspired word the order that he goes through is important because his first thing here is goodness so he's taken the fact that they have this faith from God but then they have to do something they have to work at something and this is this word goodness now before we get too carried away with what goodness means other words that it could have been translated as is virtue or excellence although if you look at what he's already said he talks about

Jesus Christ who's given us this he says by his own glory and goodness in other words we're to look to Christ as the model of this thing but we know that we're never going to be good in this life we're always going to fail but we should seek excellence just from the practical point of view just think about how we live our lives usually we want to be excellent at something don't we we don't just want to play football but we want to play in the world cup final and score a hat trick well I did well I didn't actually ever but we have these things we don't just want to be good we want to be excellent in our studies at school when we were at school or college or whatever it was we didn't just want to just pass the exams we wanted the best grade or even if we didn't our mums and dads wanted it for us and as we go through life you know we wanted the best partner that we could find and hopefully we found that and you know in everything we want to be the best in our jobs we want the best job the best salary whatever it would be and it's as if

[17:50] Peter's pointed to these people and say you search for all these things in the world but the world is corrupt all this is wasted what we should be searching for is excellence in following the Lord Jesus Christ and what follows is built on that he's telling us how to be excellent not from the worldly point of view but from the spiritual point of view and so he begins his list and his first one after goodness is knowledge it's absolutely clear that he doesn't just mean knowledge in terms of facts if I asked you who was the wife of Moses yeah and when you do that in a quiz they nearly always say you know his sister's name don't they because they think that was good you get bonus points for that

Alan but what earthly good does knowing that mean from a spiritual point of view you could know this book backwards and forwards but that in itself wouldn't make you a Christian it'd just make you an educated ignorant person if there is such a thing no this knowledge is knowledge about something else because he talks about this as we get further on if you go again to verse 8 when we want to be effective and productive rather than ineffective and unproductive look what he says in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ this isn't just facts this is knowing him and growing in wisdom growing in our knowledge of what God is like knowing him as we would know a brother a sister a mother a father a wife a husband the intimate knowledge of God the things that go between the lines of scripture that we can interpret from scripture but that we need to know about God if we're seeking for this goodness therefore and this is the first thing that we need to know let's just have a brief description of it John Blanchard said this nothing good comes except from God and nothing except good comes from God in other words if we're looking for these things we need to look to God to help us with it so this is the knowledge he's talking about it's the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ it's an intimate knowledge and it can't be contemplated as far as Peter's concerned that these Christians could live their lives as it were ignorant of the Lord they need to know more day by day I was asked a question this morning when I was preaching at the Christian fellowship I was talking about Genesis and about when people died and pointing out that Adam was the first man to die according to the dates that are given in the scripture and a visitor came up to me afterwards introduced by one of the members there and said yeah but what about

Eve when did Eve die why doesn't you mention Eve and I said I don't know because the Bible doesn't tell us because in those days it was more common to explain what happened to the males rather than the females presumably she did die but it didn't seem important enough to record when or how old she was it was all through the male line that gives us one clue you could look at other passages in scriptures the fact is in our lifetime in terms of our knowledge of God and of Christ if the knowledge of him is about the universe about his creation about everything that he has made about all the things that he's ever done what does our knowledge in this life amount to that much or maybe the thickness of a fingernail but we need to seek that knowledge for ourselves the next thing that's mentioned after knowledge is self control and the order as I say is important if someone has no knowledge of God no intimate connection with God then they're out of control in James it talks even about a small thing like our tongue bringing forth evil things because we don't have control of it and it suggests that if we had control even of our tongue we'd be in control of our whole being but the fact is we don't have that control but imagine now that we've as it were sought in our knowledge of

[23 : 38] God to make that knowledge deeper more intimate and know more about him then that will help us to be self controlled because of the fact that our knowledge of him would enable us to know how he would have reacted how did Peter react when he was about to be arrested or when Jesus was about to be arrested he cut off one of the soldiers ears and on the other occasion he ran away and claimed he wasn't one of the disciples he was out of control he wasn't thinking clearly he wasn't being guided by what the Lord would have done but just imagine on the other hand at those moments as a Christian when you're challenged to do something that you know you shouldn't you know you would regret if you were able to answer that question well how would Jesus have reacted in this situation but we know don't we

Jesus didn't react to these people he says he went meekly to the cross like a lamb to the slaughter he didn't react he was in complete control how much control well controlled enough to go to a cross knowing the suffering that would follow knowing that he would be cut off from the father in that moment of death knowing perfectly what it would mean and yet going meekly and saying forgive them for they know not what they do which of us is that sort of control of our lives I'd suggest very few of us so if we have this knowledge it might enable us to be more self-controlled James says this submit yourselves then to God resist the devil and he will flee from you if we lose control we let the devil in we make these snap decisions and we say things that we later regret then it lets the devil in and forms dissension so self-control is important but even more important is perseverance which comes next so after self-control we're to add perseverance this really is to do with not being defeatist not feeling that everything is lost and in all of the things that have already been mentioned and those that follow we're to persevere with them we're to be faithful with them that's why I read at the beginning those verses from Psalm 145 I'll just remind you how it started from the section that I read this is what it says the Lord is faithful to all his promises and it goes on that faithfulness if you like is equated to perseverance God's faithfulness doesn't change it goes on it goes on it goes on and if you wanted any further indication of it you've only got to look at Psalm 136 give thanks to the Lord for he is good his love endures forever give thanks to the God of God his love endures forever give thanks to the Lord of Lords his love endures forever Tim who alone does great wonders his love endures forever God himself perseveres as a teacher you have to persevere there are some children surprisingly who don't want to work who don't like

I'm looking at you mathematics and they don't want to do it they don't want to enjoy it they don't want to work as hard as they can and as a teacher you've got to persevere with them and as Colin and others will testify they test your perseverance to the limit how much more must the Lord look on us when we constantly sin when we constantly don't consider him but the Bible says he perseveres with us his love endures forever he won't forget his love he won't forget the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ died to save us and that we claim those promises and his love will endure we have surely a lot to learn we know that throughout the Bible there were those who were told that what they needed to do was just to persevere and of course the flavour of the month at the moment is to buy a mug with keep calm and carry on yeah or something similar keep calm and eat chocolate keep calm and do whatever but what is it that Joshua was exhorted be strong and courageous just carry on do the work persevere and the next thing he comes to is godliness so once we've persevered with these things so we've got this knowledge of God and his goodness we've achieved this self control or a measure of it and we've persevered then the next thing to add is godliness well that's a

difficult concept but remember what the opposite is as a Christian what if somebody said well you're completely godless what would it mean well it would mean that people when they look at you wouldn't know that you were following God that there was nothing about you that would hint that you were Christian nothing that you could point to that people would recognize as being godliness some of us those of us who are older I was introduced as an old friend of the Christian fellowship this morning and they objected to that because it should have been a very old friend but just imagine for a moment that you know somebody was looking for godliness in you that's something that's very difficult isn't it and yet for those of us who are old enough remember a visit by Stuart Harvison who wrote

[30 : 32] God's Orphans in Vietnam and he could barely speak English he should be in Vietnam so long he spoke in very broken English that was hard to understand but he glowed with godliness and that's not just me many people would have said the same thing he was clearly a man of God it just shone out of him and of course it makes you think about yourself and whether this is true of you I said this morning how many times have you been talking to somebody and it's come out that you go to church on Sunday and then they say to you in surprise so you're a Christian as if it's not obvious and of course the sad fact is it often isn't obvious well we need something to guide as a sort of definition so I'm going to give you two first one by Jerry Bridges godliness is devotion to God which results in a life that's pleasing to him devotion to God it begs a question tonight are we devoted to God are we devoted to other things and Jim

Packer said this the godly man's dearest wish is to exalt God with all that he is and in all that he does that's something to seek for isn't it to exalt God with all that he is and in all that he does so this is the godliness that we to seek that we're so immersed in the Lord and his work that it's evident to all that that's our prime concern and if we need any further sort of encouragement then we need to remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples who was closer to Christ than his disciples and yet there were times when they showed a complete ignorance of what he was there for and they clearly didn't understand and also they didn't really know anything about godliness he said this to them on one occasion if you really knew me you would know my father as well because Jesus is pointing his disciples to the father albeit that we see the father reflected in the glory of his son but nevertheless we need to know the father so after this after we've added godliness then it says brotherly kindness and that is the word in Greek Philadelphia this is literally to our brothers to our sisters brotherly kindness well there's surely something that the church has to learn the number of stories I've heard in recent days about people who've been driven away from church because they've not felt that brotherly or sisterly kindness from other people who were supposed to be Christians because we're following the same

Lord Jesus and so this is important this is what follows from our knowledge of God it follows from the godliness that we're trying to attain by looking to Christ and so brotherly kindness love amongst the brethren is something that we should seek to have so that we can ensure that the thing which God loves above all things which is the church is kept firmly unified in the bonds of peace there's the next one which is a different word having used Philadelphia for brotherly kindness he then goes on to love and love this time is agape love in other words it's God's love for his people there is no greater love than this love in other words we're to seek to add to our faith and all these other things that we mentioned love this is what

James Rennick said you must love Christ with a sincere love with a new love with an entire love with a superlative love and you must love him for himself and not for anything you get from him in other words it's a self denying love it's an all encompassing love it's one which reaches out not expecting reward but it's heart love it's soul love for our creator for our saviour now of course all this might seem impossible but remember we've got a great God and he said at the start that his divine power has given us everything we need but what is it we need what is it that's going to take us through all this and lead us on well it's the Holy Spirit

[36 : 24] Jesus was the one who Simon states at the start through his death and resurrection who's given us life in the first place but once we've got life it's the Holy Spirit who guides us through our life and helps us with these things with the same power that same creative power that God had in order to help us to go along this pathway that Peter is describing and what we've got to remember here is that we've got to remember a couple of things in order to as it were carry us through first ones from 1 Corinthians and verse 8 of chapter 1 he that is Jesus will keep you strong to the end so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ Jesus will keep you

strong to the end so that you will be blameless on the day of our

Lord Jesus Christ and this is why in his letters Paul in very similar ways in many of them I'm just quoting the one from Philipians says this and this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge in depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God well we read what those fruits of righteousness were earlier on let me remind you of them forget the things of this world that's what Paul and what Peter are guarding against for Christians but the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control a different list but very similar and sometimes just using other words against such things there is no law those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires since we live by the spirit let us keep in step with the spirit let us not become conceited provoking and envying each other I had a nightmare in Ukraine one of the people was helping me with the sport activities that we're doing right decided that she was going to have a three legged race with the children so there was a little tot of four or five matched with a big strapping 13 year old lad with her legs tied together and in a race trying to run faster than the other pairs now I've seen this in things in the past and I've seen broken legs and twisted knees and all sorts I was really worried about it and it's hard isn't it to keep in step when you're tired like that and you're going at a different rate to them and that's that vision of the

Christian walking with the Holy Spirit we need to be in step so the best three legged as you walk along and if you keep that then you'll manage so Paul prays for believers that they would grow in the knowledge and depth of insight of Christ and what does this lead to well we've got Jesus who is at the forefront in our conversion and then we've got the Holy Spirit who guides us through this world and what are we're looking for we're looking for that gift of eternal life that was promised by Christ to one day be in heaven and so it ends in this way this is from Revelation chapter 22 verses 3 to 5 the throne of God and the lamb will be in the city this is the new

Jerusalem and his servants will serve him they will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads there will be no more night they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun for the Lord God will give them light and they will reign forever and ever this is the goal for every Christian it's promised through Christ shed blood and his sacrifice for sins once and for all but we have that duty we are servants of the living God and though we won't ever attain perfection in this life Peter is saying something that every Christian needs to know that if we seek these things and earnestly follow them through the word of

[41 : 54] God they will protect us in this life so that when we come to this kingdom we'll be able to take our place that privileged place of being part of God's family and the sad thing is for all of us and this is really I suppose for each of us we've got to answer in our own lives we all stray we all fall into sin from time to time we all do things that we don't want to do say things that we don't want to say and think things that we don't want to think and when we do that the possibility is that our faith will grow dim and we'll be vulnerable to the devil because he's working against all of these things so this is like for mums I know that you'll be thinking of this when you send your children away for any time on a camp or even for the day or on some activity there's an advert on television at the moment where the little boy is going to play football and mum thinks it's going to rain and she gives him his jacket and he says oh mum do

I have to wear this jacket it because you want them to be protected from whatever might happen whatever the eventuality might be Chris did a great job of packing for Graham because he got mosquito repellent plasters a full set of chemicals to give in case anything happened short of brain surgery I think Graham could have carried out anything he even was able to lend me a torch because he got an extra one just in case one failed and it happened to be dark in the camp where we were he was prepared and when Peter was talking to these people he said to protect yourselves to stop the false teachers getting in to stop the coolness to the Lord setting in so that you're really zealous for him and able to follow him and be productive and effective these are the things that we need to work at let's seek to do that in order we might give all the glory and all the honour to him Amen