

Letters From A Fisherman
Week 21
2 Peter 1:1-9
“Living Off of Your Inheritance”

Introduction

In Him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory. **Ephesians 1:13-14**

As we begin our study of Peter’s second epistle to the persecuted church, it is worth noting that this was to be his final known correspondence before his execution. He knew full well as he wrote this letter that his own time was short (**2 Peter 1:14**), but rather than focus upon his own rapidly advancing martyrdom, he chose instead to use what little time he had left to do as Christ had commanded him the night before he went to the cross:

Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. **Luke 22:31-32**

In his final days, the strengthening of Peter’s brethren was the foremost thing in his mind.

A sure fire way to tell that someone has been with Jesus is the way they have re-ordered their priorities. No longer is the desire to serve-self paramount in the born-again Christian, instead, they become more concerned with the priorities of The Master. And Peter knew full well that Christ wanted him to equip the saints for every good work as long as there was breath left in his body.

He begins his final letter by addressing himself as **“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Christ Jesus.”** This is different from the salutation from his previous letter. Perhaps his intention was to remind those in the church that he was once “Simon” the impetuous and unstable disciple, but by God’s grace he was now “Peter” the rock, a slave, and ambassador of Christ, for God had made a change in his nature. We all, who have had an encounter with The Risen LORD, can identify with this reality; for to know Christ is to never be the same as we were before.

Peter reminded his readers, that if they were also followers of Jesus, then they had received the very same gift of grace as any apostle (**vs. 1b**), for God doesn’t have *favorite* children. He loves all those who come to Christ with the exact same perfect love, and as such, we all are heirs of His divine blessings. And it is of those blessings that Peter wished to remind us all. For God has made a deposit in His spiritual bank account from which we all can withdraw as needed. He will not withhold His riches from any of His children. This is the reason that Peter can state with confidence:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our LORD. **2 Peter 1:2**

Peter used the words for “know” or “knowledge” at least thirteen times in this short epistle, for he knew that the more we truly come to know Christ, the more fruitful we will become on behalf of His kingdom. He learned this reality from The Master Himself the night before He went to the cross, as He had gathered His disciples in the upper room instructing them:

If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples. **John 15:7-8**

It is exactly this spiritual reality that Peter wishes to convey to all of us in this his final letter. That we may know Christ and know Him intimately. Twice in his opening he uses the Greek “*epignosis*”, which literally means “*super knowledge*”. For if indeed we acquire the deepest knowledge of Christ, then we will find all that we need to be fruitful. There are those who have taken hold of this knowledge and those who have not, but it is equally available to all who believe. So let us look today at the *spiritual bank account* which God has opened on our behalf. There is a wealth of treasure there at our disposal. In my former life I was a banker, if you will indulge me, I would like to explain what we have in Christ in banking terms. We will be examining our *Deposit of Wealth*, the *Depletion of Wealth* and the *Dormancy of Wealth*.

The Deposit of Wealth (vs. 3-4)

His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him Who called us by His own glory and goodness. By these He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.

2 Peter 1:3-4

To the scoffer who would argue that they simply cannot live the christian life, Peter would beg to differ. He boldly proclaims that God has given us (deposited into our account, if you will) **everything** that is required for us to live a life of what he calls “*godliness*”. The word is *eusebia* in the Greek, and it carries with it the idea of living a worshipful, pious life that is pleasing unto The LORD. We cannot claim, therefore, that God has not enabled us for godliness, for indeed His Word most certainly says that He has. The very power we need has been deposited into our spiritual account. And as Peter has already stated, we have access to the very same “*funds*”, if you will, as even the greatest of the apostles (**vs. 1**)!

To claim that we have no access to these funds is tantamount to calling God a liar, for His Word tells us that we have all been properly outfitted for service. To describe the wealth that God has provided for us, Peter uses a word that he seems to relish when describing God’s provisions. The word is *timeos* (pronounced Tim’-ee-os), and it has been translated as “*precious*” in the CSB. Simply put, what God has deposited into your spiritual account is of tremendous value. You have been granted an inheritance that is fit for a king’s son or daughter. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to spend it.

I often read about individuals who have won millions in the lottery. And sadly, many of them end up being bankrupt after only a year or two. I cannot begin to imagine exactly how this could be, but it occurs more often than one would imagine. The good news for the Christian is that God’s riches never run dry. And the more that we spend them, the more we are given to replace them! There is a stark difference between worldly wealth and spiritual wealth. That is why *The Word* admonishes us to be rich toward God and not to be consumed by earthly riches.

Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, Who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Material wealth is fleeting, but the riches of Christ are eternal and shall never run dry. And everyone who is in Christ has been given access to the very same precious deposit of wealth, to be accessible to us at all times. Sadly, it seems that many Christians today have forgotten their PIN number and are failing to access the limitless funds that are ever at their disposal. This is why there’s so much sin prevalent within the church today. God has provided all that we need for godliness. So let’s make use of the precious promise of wealth that He has so richly provided and stop making excuses for our own spiritual poverty, or as Peter has deemed it, the corruption (*rotteness*) that is so prevalent in the world. We are called to be different. To be godly and not worldly, and we have been given all that we need in order to live a life that is pleasing to God and to become an example for others to follow.

The Depletion of Wealth (vs. 5-8)

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, brotherly affection with love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-8

When people store up for themselves a life savings, there comes a time (forbearing any unforeseen tragedy) that they must retire. At which that time they begin to draw upon their savings in order to live. This is known in banking terms as “*the depletion of accrued wealth*”. And in a similar way, God Who has provided a precious, spiritual savings account for us all, expects us to use it in order to live for His glory. But this will not happen automatically. Just as a person must access his funds from his retirement account, the Believer is required to access the spiritual wealth that God has provided for him.

This is the reason that Peter says we must “***make every effort...***” for godly living. A powerful spiritual walk does not come automatically, but rather, we must put in the effort. We most certainly do not earn our salvation by works, it is a gift of grace bestowed upon us the moment that we first believe. However, there must be work on our part in order for us to live out what we believe! As James has so bluntly, yet profoundly, proclaimed: “***...Faith without works... is dead (James 2:26)***”. Simply put, you don’t have to work to *become* a christian, but you certainly have to work at *being* a christian.

Peter gives a list of treasures that we must access from our “account” so that we may live this christian walk. Many *Bible* teachers have argued that this list isn’t a progressive one, with each thing building on the one that preceded it, but I would argue to the contrary. I believe each of these treasures if you will, when accessed enable you to move to the next. This is why, I believe, that Peter repeats each of them as he goes down his progression.

The first thing that we are to diligently work at adding to our foundational faith in Christ is what the CSB translates as “***goodness***” (*arete* in the Greek). A better translation would be “virtue”, for the word carries with it the idea of a valiant stand for what is true and noble and morally pure. Think of a knight in shining armor defending the faith that he so cherishes, and you will get a general idea. And to have this kind of bold stand for truth, one must then have an appetite for even more truth.

Enter the next item on the list; “***knowledge***”. Peter repeatedly uses this word *gnosis* which speaks of an intimate knowledge. To know Christ is to want to know Him even more. We do this by abiding in the Word of God, for it is within the Word itself that the very nature of Christ is revealed to us. The more we know The Word, the more we know the heart of The Savior. And to know Him is to long to become more like Him.

Now, for the third item on the list; knowing Christ makes us long to be like Christ, and to do that, we must learn ***self-control***. For it is our fleshly desires that would take us in an opposite direction from His leading. We must learn to put our own fleshly natures in check in order to act upon the knowledge we have received. In short, we put *ourselves* in check in order to embrace *His* ways. For anyone who would follow after Him must first deny himself and take up his cross and follow. Which leads me to the next point.

Endurance, the patient acceptance of the struggle which is based upon a conviction that the end of the journey will be worth the pain. We can never truly embrace patient endurance until we have first learned the discipline of self-control. No one starts off with patient endurance, for it is through the trials we face that we learn to endure (***Romans 5:3; James 1:2-4***).

Next comes “***godliness***” (*eusebeia* in the Greek), which simply means that one has the right standing before God. Their worshipful life is genuine. They are, in short, Christ-like. It is only by patient endurance of our trials that we are shaped and remade in Christ’s image. As we have explained earlier in Peter’s first epistle, with regards to suffering: No crucible of fire, no refinement.

The last two things that Peter mentions are related; ***brotherly love*** and ***agape love***, for to be conformed in the image of Christ is to love as He loves, a selfless all-consuming love that is willing to lay down its life for its friends. Jesus says, that it is by this the world will truly know that we belong to Him.

By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.

John 13:35

Peter concluded the list by saying that if we draw these things from our spiritual bank account, if we deplete these treasures, as it were, then we will be kept from uselessness and unfruitfulness. Nothing worse could be said about a Believer who has nothing to show when The King returns. For we each are to give an account of what we have accomplished with all that we have been given. I can imagine nothing more heartbreaking than to hear the Master’s rebuke:

His master replied to him, "You evil, lazy servant! If you knew that I reap where I haven't sown and gather where I haven't scattered, then you should have deposited My money with the bankers, and I would have received My money back with interest when I returned." **Matthew 25:26-27**

Far better to deplete the wealth you have been given for His glory in order to hear Him say,

... "Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your Master's joy." **Matthew 25:23**

The Dormancy of Wealth (vs. 9)

The person who lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten the cleansing from his past sins. **2 Peter 1:9**

Back in my banking days I was surprised to learn that many bank accounts (far more than you would imagine) go into a dormancy status from lack of use. This is usually due to the death of the account's signatory, who has left no heirs to take over their account. When this happens, after a time, the state actually seizes the funds to use them for its own ends. Dormant accounts are what happens when no one spends, or makes other provision for the use of, their own funds.

A lot of Christians are living day to day with a dormant spiritual account. They have been given access to such great riches to enable them to bear fruit for Christ, but somehow, they have neglected this wealth in exchange for the temporal pleasures of this life. Peter calls these people "**blind and nearsighted**", for they are unable to see the big picture, but rather are focused only on the here and now. For this reason many churches today are spiritually dead. Oh, they may well meet every single Sunday, but meeting is about as far as it goes for them. They can only see what is directly in front of them at the moment. But we are called to so much more than a dead useless faith!

Remember not long ago, we talked about the children of Israel who grumbled and complained so much that God left them in the wilderness to die? They were upset, because they missed the onions in Egypt (among other things). That's an incredible thing to be upset about when God is leading you to a land of milk and honey! So again I say:

*"You are either dying for an onion in the wilderness,
or you are living for a land of milk and honey."*

The choice is ours to make.

In order to be all that God intends for you to become, you must not allow your spiritual account to lapse into a dormant status. We must, as Peter says, "**make every effort to add to our faith**", for faith without works is a dead faith. So just imagine for a moment what a lasting impact you could make in this world simply by accessing the spiritual wealth that has been laid aside for you? You were redeemed from your sin, and given immense freedom to go and bear fruit... fruit that will last long after you are gone on to your eternal reward.

Don't be nearsighted. Step back, and see the eternal for a moment, and stop focusing on the temporal. God has given you this life, this one chance to shine for His glory. It won't last forever, so would it not be better to end your days with praise on your lips, than with a sigh of regret? You have been given access to great spiritual riches. So go to the bank and draw out the funds! And those "funds" are The Spirit and The Word. Make every effort to add to your faith, and you will not be sorry!

TRUTH!!!