

**2 Peter 1:8-15**  
**September 3, 2017**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Over the last two lessons, we took the time to explore seven qualities that Peter suggested we cultivate in order to build upon our faith, to grow spiritually. So if we are cultivating these qualities, it begs the question:

Q: How can we as believers be certain that we are growing spiritually? How do we measure that?  
[Let people to engage]

**Transition:** Our goal today is to appreciate that the Christian life begins with faith, but that faith must lead to spiritual growth. If we build our faith by cultivating the seven qualities Peter shared with us in this chapter, it should lead to growth, and growth leads to practical results in life and service. Let's begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984):**

V.8:

- For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V.9:

- But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

V.10:

- Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,

V.11:

- and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.8: Peter makes an interesting statement in this verse. Why is it important to possess these QUALITIES by “increasing measure?” [We need to be effective and productive in God’s Kingdom. Peter suggests that God has an expectation that we produce fruit in our lives, and these qualities help us do that.]

Q: What does **fruit** look like?

Several different kinds of spiritual fruit are named in the Bible:

- We bear fruit when we win others to Christ (Rom. 1:13). We are a part of the harvest (John 4:35–38).
- As we grow in holiness and obedience, we are bearing fruit (Rom. 6:22).
- Paul considered Christian giving to be fruit from a dedicated life (Rom. 15:28).

- “The fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–23) is the kind of Christian character that glorifies God and makes Christ real to others. Even our good works, our service, grow out of our abiding life (Col. 1:10).
- The praise that comes from our hearts and lips is actually fruit to the glory of God (Heb. 13:15).

Q V.9: How does Peter describe the Christian who lacks these QUALITIES? [He is nearsighted (closing or squinting your eyes) and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.]

Q: Do you think he’s referring to those we call “carnal Christians?” [Yes; there are people who become Christians, but then don’t grow in their new found love relationship to Jesus.]

Observation: Peter is highlighting these qualities because as these qualities manifest themselves in us by increasing measure, *it is evidence that we are growing spiritually!* A healthy, living organism GROWS! And as Christians, when we are growing spiritually, we become more like Jesus, which means the Spirit can use us in witness and service.

Q V.10: What does Peter call us to do? [Be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure so that you will never fall]

Q: So is Peter saying that our salvation is based on our performance? Isn’t that contrary to the gospel message? [It focuses on the confidence a Christian has about his standing with God. This word “fall” means “stumble” and does NOT suggest that a believer loses his salvation, for salvation does not depend on one’s spiritual growth or performance. The Greek word for stumble means “to trip up.” Certainly one who is maturing in Christ will not trip up in his spiritual life as readily as one who is immature and nearsighted.]

**[Read 2 Peter 1:12-15]**

V.12:

- So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

V.13:

- I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body,

V.14:

- because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

V.15:

- And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

**Process Questions:**

Q V.12: Peter states that he is reminding his readers of these “things.” What things? [The seven QUALITIES we just explored.]

Q: Peter reveals three MOTIVES as to why he is revisiting the importance of growing our faith. Starting with v.12, what is his first motive? [To *remind them of spiritual truths*]

Q V.13: What is his motive in this verse? [To *refresh their memories of the spiritual truths as long as he lives*]

Q V.14: What is Peter referencing when he says, “I will soon put it aside?” [“It” refers to the “tent of his body” and he’s saying the Lord has made it clear that his death is close.]

Q V.15: What is Peter’s motive here? [He again is making every effort to help them *remember everything he’s taught them* since his life is nearing its end.]

Observation: Peter knows his life is ending, and yet he’s spending his last hours to encourage other believers! It’s like he sees these Christians as his spiritual children and wants them to retain everything he’s taught them. His teachings are a legacy for them to have after he leaves them.

### **LOOK:**

The church is always one generation away from extinction. If there were no dependable written revelation, we would have to depend on word-of-mouth tradition. If we did not have a dependable written revelation, the church would be at the mercy of men’s memories. People who pride themselves on having good memories should sit on the witness stand in a courtroom! It is amazing that three perfectly honest witnesses can, with good conscience, give three different accounts of an automobile accident! Our memories are defective and selective. We usually remember what we want to remember, and often we distort even that. Let’s thank God for the written Word.

### **Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 439–442). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

**Spiritual Growth Brings Practical Results (2 Peter 1:8–11)**

How can the believer be certain that he is growing spiritually? Peter gave three evidences of true spiritual growth.

***Fruitfulness (v. 8).*** Christian character is an end in itself, but it is also a means to an end. The more we become like Jesus Christ, the more the Spirit can use us in witness and service. The believer who is not growing is idle (“barren”) and unfruitful. His knowledge of Jesus Christ is producing nothing practical in his life. The word translated “idle” also means “ineffective.” The people who fail to grow usually fail in everything else!

Some of the most effective Christians I have known are people without dramatic talents and special abilities, or even exciting personalities; yet God has used them in a marvelous way. Why? Because they are becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. They have the kind of character and conduct that God can trust with blessing. They are fruitful because they are faithful; they are effective because they are growing in their Christian experience.

These beautiful qualities of character do exist “within us” because we possess the divine nature. We must cultivate them so that they increase and produce fruit in and through our lives.

***Vision (v. 9).*** Nutritionists tell us that diet can certainly affect vision and this is especially true in the spiritual realm. The unsaved person is in the dark because Satan has blinded his mind (2 Cor. 4:3–4). A person has to be born again before his eyes are opened and he can see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). But after our eyes are opened, it is important that we increase our vision and see all that God wants us to see. The phrase *cannot see afar off* is the translation of a word that means “shortsighted.” It is the picture of somebody closing or squinting his eyes, unable to see at a distance.

There are some Christians who see only their own church, or their own denomination, but who fail to see the greatness of God’s family around the world. Some believers see the needs at home but have no vision for a lost world. Someone asked Phillips Brooks what he would do to revive a dead church, and he replied, “I would preach a missionary sermon and take up a collection!” Jesus admonished His disciples, “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

Some congregations today are like the church at Laodicea: they are proud that they are “rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” and do not realize that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). It is a tragedy to be “spiritually nearsighted,” but it is even a greater tragedy to be blind!

If we forget what God has done for us, we will not be excited to share Christ with others. Through the blood of Jesus Christ we have been purged and forgiven! God has opened our eyes! Let’s not forget what He has done! Rather, let’s cultivate gratitude in our hearts and sharpen our spiritual vision. Life is too brief and the needs of the world too great for God’s people to be walking around with their eyes closed!

***Security (vv. 10–11).*** If you walk around with your eyes closed, you will stumble! But the growing Christian walks with confidence because he knows he is secure in Christ. It is not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are saved; it is our progression in the faith that gives us that assurance. The person who claims to be a child of God but whose character and conduct give no evidence of spiritual growth is deceiving himself and heading for judgment.

Peter pointed out that “calling” and “election” go together. The same God who *elects* His people also ordains the means to *call* them. The two must go together, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation ... Whereunto He called you by our Gospel” (2 Thes. 2:13–14). We do not preach election to unsaved people; we preach the Gospel. But God uses that Gospel to call sinners to repentance, and then those sinners discover that they were chosen by God!

Peter also pointed out that election is no excuse for spiritual immaturity or for lack of effort in the Christian life. Some believers say, “What is going to be is going to be. There is nothing we can do.” But Peter admonishes us to “be diligent.” This means “make every effort.” (He used this same verb in 2 Peter 1:5.) While it is true that God must work in us before we can do His will (Phil. 2:12–13), it is also true that we must *be willing* for God to work, and we must cooperate with Him. Divine election must never be an excuse for human laziness.

The Christian who is sure of his election and calling will never “stumble” but will prove by a consistent life that he is truly a child of God. He will not always be on the mountaintop, but he will always be climbing higher. If we do “these things” (the things listed in 2 Peter 1:5–7, cf. v. 8), if we display Christian growth and character in our daily lives, then we can be sure we are converted and will one day be in heaven.

In fact, the growing Christian can look forward to “an abundant entrance” into the eternal kingdom! The Greeks used this phrase to describe the welcome given Olympic winners when they returned home. Every believer will arrive in heaven, but some will have a more glorious welcome than others. Alas, some believers “shall be saved, yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

The word *ministered* in 2 Peter 1:11 is the same as the word *add* in 2 Peter 1:5, and is the translation of a Greek word that means “to bear the expenses of a chorus.” When the Greek theatrical groups presented their dramas, somebody had to underwrite the expenses, which were very great. The word came to mean “to make lavish provision.” If we make lavish provision to grow spiritually (2 Peter 1:5), then God will make lavish provision for us when we enter heaven!

Just think of the blessings that the growing Christian enjoys: fruitfulness, vision, security—and heaven’s best! All this and heaven too!

The Christian life begins with faith, but that faith must lead to spiritual growth—unless it is dead faith. But dead faith is not saving faith (James 2:14–26). Faith leads to growth and growth leads to practical results in life and service. People who have this kind of Christian experience are not likely to fall prey to apostate false teachers.

## **WAKE UP AND REMEMBER!**

### *2 Peter 1:12–21*

The best defense against false teaching is true living. A church filled with growing Christians, vibrant in their faith, is not likely to fall prey to apostates with their counterfeit Christianity. But this Christian living must be based on the authoritative Word of God. False teachers find it easy to seduce people who do not know their Bible but who are desirous of “experiences” with the Lord. It is a dangerous thing to build on subjective experience alone and ignore objective revelation.

Peter discussed Christian experience in the first half of 2 Peter 1, and in the last half he discussed the revelation we have in the Word of God. His purpose is to show the importance of

knowing God's Word and relying on it completely. The Christian who knows what he believes and why he believes it will rarely be seduced by the false teachers and their devious doctrines.

Peter underscores the dependability and durability of the Word of God by contrasting Scripture with men, experiences, and the world.

### **Men Die, but the Word Lives (2 Peter 1:12–15)**

Through their preaching and teaching, the Apostles and New Testament prophets laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and we in later generations are building on that foundation. However, the men were not the foundation; Jesus Christ is the Foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). He is also the chief Cornerstone that ties the building together (Eph. 2:20). If the church is to last, it cannot be built on mere men. It must be built on the Son of God.

Our Lord had told Peter when he would die and how he would die. "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John 21:18). This explains why, shortly after Pentecost, Peter was able to sleep in prison the night before he was scheduled to be killed; he knew that Herod could not take his life (Acts 12:1ff). Tradition says that Peter was crucified in Rome. Like all of God's faithful servants, Peter was immortal until his work was done.

There were at least three motives behind Peter's ministry as he wrote this letter. The first was *obedience to Christ's command*. "I will not be negligent" (2 Peter 1:12). "When thou art converted," Jesus had said to Peter, "strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). Peter knew that he had a ministry to fulfill.

His second motive was simply that this reminder was *the right thing to do*. "I think it meet," he wrote, which simply means, "I think it is right and suitable." It is always right to stir up the saints and remind them of the Word of God!

His third motive is wrapped up in the word *endeavor* in 2 Peter 1:15. It is the same word that is translated *diligence* in 2 Peter 1:5 and 10. It means "to hasten to do something, to be zealous in doing it." Peter knew that he would soon die, so he wanted to take care of his spiritual responsibilities before it was too late. You and I do not know when we will die, so we had better start being diligent today!

What was it that Peter wanted to accomplish? The answer is found in the word that is repeated in 2 Peter 1:12–13 and 15—*remembrance*. Peter wanted to impress his readers' minds with the Word of God so that they would never forget it! "I think it meet ... to stir you up by putting you in remembrance" (2 Peter 1:13). The verb *stir you up* means "to awaken, to arouse." This same word is used to describe a storm on the Sea of Galilee! (John 6:18) Peter knew that our minds have a tendency to get accustomed to truth and then to take it for granted. We forget what we ought to remember, and we remember what we ought to forget!

The readers of this letter knew the truth and were even "established" in it (2 Peter 1:12), but that was no guarantee they would always remember the truth and apply it. One reason the Holy Spirit was given to the church was to remind believers of the lessons already learned (John 14:26). In my own radio ministry, I have received letters from listeners who get upset when I repeat something. In my reply, I often refer them to what Paul wrote in Philippians 3:1—"To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." Our Lord often repeated Himself as He taught the people, and He was the Master Teacher.

Peter knew that he was going to die, so he wanted to leave behind something that would never die—the written Word of God. His two epistles became a part of the inspired Scriptures,

and they have been ministering to the saints for centuries. Men die, but the Word of God lives on!

It is possible that Peter was also alluding to the Gospel of Mark. Most Bible scholars believe that the Spirit used Peter to give John Mark some of the data for his book (see 1 Peter 5:13). One of the church fathers, Papias, said that Mark was “Peter’s disciple and interpreter.”

The church of Jesus Christ is always one generation away from extinction. If there were no dependable written revelation, we would have to depend on word-of-mouth tradition. If you have ever played the party game “Gossip,” you know how a simple sentence can be radically changed when passed from one person to another! We do not depend on the traditions of dead men; we depend on the truth of the living Word. Men die, but the Word lives forever.

If we did not have a dependable written revelation, the church would be at the mercy of men’s memories. People who pride themselves on having good memories should sit on the witness stand in a courtroom! It is amazing that three perfectly honest witnesses can, with good conscience, give three different accounts of an automobile accident! Our memories are defective and selective. We usually remember what we want to remember, and often we distort even that.

Fortunately, we can depend on the written Word of God. “It is written” and it stands written forever. We can be saved through this living Word (1 Peter 1:23–25), nurtured by it (1 Peter 2:2), and guided and protected as we trust and obey.

**Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 866-868). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## 2. CONSEQUENCES OF THE FUNCTION (1:8)

1:8. Christian growth (vv. 5–7) results in spiritual effectiveness and productivity. The word **possess** (*hyparchōnta*, lit. “possessing”) emphasizes that these spiritual qualities “belong to” Christians. However, Christians are to do more than merely possess these virtues. Effective and productive spirituality comes as **these qualities** are held in **increasing measure**. There is to be a growth in grace. A believer who does not progress in these seven areas is **ineffective** (*argous*, “idle” or “useless”) **and unproductive** (lit., “unfruitful”) **in his knowledge** (*epignōsin*, “full personal knowledge”; cf. vv. 2–3; 2:20) **of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Unfortunately many Christians know the Lord in salvation but lack the “fruit” of the Spirit and are not advancing spiritually. They remain “infants in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1), still in need of spiritual “milk” (Heb. 5:12–13). But as Peter urged, believers should “grow in the grace and knowledge (*gnōsei*) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

## 3. CONTRASTS OF THE FUNCTION (1:9)

1:9. In contrast with a growing Christian, a carnal believer is **blind** (*typhlos*) and **nearsighted** (*myōpazōn*). *Myōpazōn* (from which comes the word “myopia”), occurs only here in the New Testament. A believer with spiritual myopia is not magnifying the grace of Christ. Since his life is not evidencing the qualities cited in verses 5–7, he seems to be just like a spiritually blind (or unsaved) person (2 Cor. 4:4; cf. John 9:39). Such a person **has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past** (preconversion) **sins**. Some commentators say this refers to unbelievers. But it seems preferable to say that Peter wrote of Christians who are spiritually immature. After all, they had been cleansed from their sins (cf. Titus 3:5), but had not grown spiritually.

### C. *The finality of the divine nature (1:10–11)*

In order to be an effective and productive Christian avoiding spiritual myopia, one must be sure that he is genuinely saved. This is demonstrated by his new life in Christ, which provides evidence that he will reach his eternal home.

#### 1. EXPERIENTIAL FINALITY (1:10)

1:10. Being **eager** (*spoudasate*, also used in vv. 1, 15; 3:14 [“make every effort”]; cf. *spoudēn* in 1:5) **to make one’s calling and election sure** focuses on the confidence a Christian has about his standing with God. A believer hardly has the authority to assure God of his status; actually the reverse is true. The Greek word for “sure” (*bebaian*) was used in classical Greek to refer to a warranty deed somewhat like those people use today on houses and other pieces of property. One’s godly behavior is a warranty deed for himself that Jesus Christ has cleansed him from his past sins and therefore that he was in fact called and elected by God. *Bebaian* is rendered “secure” (Heb. 6:19), “guaranteed” (Rom. 4:16), “firm” (2 Cor. 1:7), “courage” (Heb. 3:6), “confidence” (Heb. 3:14), and “in force” (Heb. 9:17).

“Calling” refers to God’s efficacious work in salvation (cf. Rom. 1:7; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:9), and “election” is God’s work of choosing some sinners (by His grace, not their merits) to be saved (Rom. 8:33; 11:5; Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:12; 1 Peter 1:1). Election, of course, precedes calling. A believer shows by his godly life and his growth in the virtues mentioned in 2 Peter 1:5–7 that he is one of God’s chosen. Such a believer **will not fall** (or “stumble,” *ptaisēte*). This word “stumble” does not suggest that a believer loses his salvation, for salvation does not depend on one’s spiritual growth. The Greek word for stumble means “to trip up” or “to experience a reversal.” Certainly one who is maturing in Christ will not trip up in his spiritual life as readily as one who is immature and nearsighted.

#### 2. ETERNAL FINALITY (1:11)

1:11. The ultimate reward of a growing, Christ-honoring life is the personal “welcome” by the Savior into His kingdom. Stephen experienced it (Acts 7:56); Paul knew when it was imminent for him (2 Tim. 4:7–8, 18); and every believer will experience such a welcome when he enters the Lord’s presence in heaven. **You will receive a rich welcome** is, literally, “the entrance will be supplied richly for you.” “Supplied” is from the verb *epichorēgeō*, translated “add” in 2 Peter 1:5. The entrance **into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** will be supplied with richness; it will be a wonderful “welcome home.”

### III. The Christian’s Nurture: The Word of God (1:12–21)

As Peter made a transition from focusing on the work of God in believers’ lives (vv. 3–11) to the Word of God as the instrument of nurture (vv. 16–21) he began with a parenthetical personal note about his readers’ need to remember what he wrote (vv. 12–15). His section on the Word of God climaxes in a major statement on revelation and inspiration, reaching a high-water mark in verse 21, Peter’s tribute to the Holy Spirit’s role in God-breathed Scripture.

#### A. *Memory of God’s Word (1:12–15)*.



1:12. Peter, knowing his days were numbered, wanted his readers to retain all he would write in this epistle. Three times he spoke of this: **I will ... remind you** (v. 12), “I ... refresh your memory” (v. 13), “you will ... be able to remember” (v. 15; cf. 3:1).

Peter was almost apologetic in the second half of 1:12; he did not want his readers to misunderstand his intention. He was not being critical nor did he suggest they were wavering. Instead, he said they did **know** the truths he wrote about **and** he was aware that they were **firmly established in the truth**. He wanted them to stay that way. (“Established” is from *stērizō*, which means “strengthen” or “be firm”; cf. 1 Thes. 3:2, 13; 2 Thes. 2:17; 3:3; 1 Peter 5:10.) A problem in many churches today is not that believers do not know what God expects of them, but they either forget (cf. 2 Peter 1:9) or are unwilling to live out the truth they **now have**.

1:13–14. Expecting he would **soon** be with the Lord, Peter wanted **to refresh** (lit., “keep on refreshing,”) their memories **as long as** he was allowed by the Lord of life to **live in the tent of his body** (cf. “the earthly tent” and “this tent,” 2 Cor. 5:1, 4). Peter would **put** that tent **aside, as the Lord had made clear to him**. This could refer to Jesus’ words to Peter about his death by crucifixion (John 21:18–19) or to his awareness that through old age or the threat of persecution, his life was almost at an end. The image of this earthly body being like a tent fits well with Peter’s pilgrimage theme (1 Peter 1:1, 17; 2:11).

1:15. Peter deliberately repeated himself, perhaps for emphasis: **I will make every effort** translates the one word *spoudasō*, also used in verse 10 (“be ... eager”) and in 3:14 (“make every effort”). The word **departure** (*exodon*), though not the usual word for “death,” does not veil the clarity of Peter’s suggestion that he is about to die. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus, Moses, and Elijah spoke of Jesus’ “departure” (*exodon*; Luke 9:31). Interestingly this “exodus” (lit., “going out,” i.e., from this body) contrasts with a believer’s “entrance” into (*eisodos*, “going into”) God’s kingdom (2 Peter 1:11).

How could Peter guarantee that after his death his readers would **always be able to remember these things**? Some suggest this is a subtle reference to Peter’s aid in preparing the Gospel of Mark, but this is only speculation. More obviously he was laboring to complete this second epistle which, when joined with the first, would provide ongoing written testimony of the truths so close to his heart. Still another possibility is that he referred to his own life and ministry extending into the lives of others, as Silas and Mark, who would carry on his work after he died. One thing is clear—Peter wanted to be sure that the Lord’s people would not forget God’s work and God’s Word.