

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

Peter was the “maturing” apostle, who made mistakes along the way, but through these mistakes, he learned the secret of the abundant entrance into the kingdom. He is our example of maturing in the faith. His walk with his Master started with great conflict of soul, but as his life in his earthly tent was about to end, Peter knew that he too had finished his course (2 Peter 1.13-14). He had obtained the outcome of faith—the salvation of his soul.

As he was about to depart this life through a martyr’s death, Peter wrote his second epistle in which he left us instruction on the abundant entrance into the kingdom, which is based on the mature knowledge, the meat of the word. His exhortation to us today is to be diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing us (2 Peter 1.10). Paul, Peter, and John all were made certain about His calling and choosing them; and their word to us today is that we too can and, in fact, should know about His calling and choosing us.

This article takes up Peter’s life and teaching that encourages us to be conquerors through diligence in the mature knowledge.

The “maturing” apostle.

Peter’s weaknesses stand out amongst all the apostles, but this does not mean the others had no weaknesses. In His wisdom, God has used Peter, the one who stumbled many times in his early days with the Lord, as the example to encourage us to be diligent to make our calling and election sure. Many believers, if not all of us, have much in common with Peter, for we too have often stumbled on the road to the kingdom.

Outwardly, Peter had a very strong character. He could be described as impetuous. He acted suddenly and impulsively, and this led him into trouble.

When the disciples were in the boat and Jesus appeared walking on the water, it was Peter who said to the Lord, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water” (Matthew 14.28). The Lord Jesus graciously invited Peter out of the boat and Peter stepped on the water and began to walk toward the Lord. But Peter looked at the wind, became afraid, and began to sink. He took his eyes off the Lord, looked at the conditions around him and cried out, “Lord, save me!” His loving Master immediately stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14.30-31).

Later, when the Lord told His disciples that the Son of Man would have to die and would be raised on the third day, it was Peter who took the Lord Jesus aside and rebuked Him: “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” After this rebuke, Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan!” (Matthew 16.22-

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

23). In his impulsiveness, Peter was taking a position that was contrary to the will of God. He had his interests set on the earth, not on God's interests. He was a stumbling block to the Lord.

Then, as He approached Calvary, the Lord told His disciples that all of them would fall away because of Him, for it is written, "I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered." But again, Peter's impulsiveness got the best of him and he declared, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." The Lord Jesus said those often-quoted words: "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times." Peter did not heed the warning of his Master and replied, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." It should be noted that all the disciples said the same thing too, but it was Peter who would deny the Lord in the presence of others (Matthew 26.31-35). He would end up weeping bitterly (Matthew 26.75).

Undoubtedly, as painful as these lessons were to the soul of Peter, he learned through his mistakes. Where once his faith was too weak for him to walk on water, Peter wrote of the testing of faith and receiving the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1.6-9). Upon the foundation of faith, he found the abundant entrance into the kingdom. Where once an earthly mind was a stumbling block to the cross of the Lord Jesus, Peter declared to the masses that God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory (Acts 2.32; 1 Peter 1.21). Peter's eyes were opened to the suffering that leads to glory in the coming kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Where once the cock crowed and tears flowed down his face, Peter could testify that he had tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2.3). Peter knew the anguish of the soul in the dark hour; but like seeing a light at the end of a dark tunnel, he was drawn to the Light of the world and comforted by the Shepherd and Overseer of his soul (1 Peter 2.25).

It is apparent that by the end of his life, Peter had grown in the grace and peace of his Lord. He was determined to encourage the brethren in what he had learned of his Lord, who had never cast him aside but had fully redeemed him and placed him in His service.

"Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease." (2 Peter 1.15 NKJ)

Peter had learned many lessons in his walk of faith with the Lord, and like Paul, he was exercised in his heart to exhort the brethren before his departure. By revelation, the Father had revealed to Peter that the Son of Man is the Christ, the Son of the living God, which speaks of the Lord's return to this earth as the King. Peter was one of the three disciples who witnessed the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, and Peter was diligent to share his eye witness of the glory of the kingdom that is coming. He stood on the mountain and heard the Majestic Glory speak forth: "This is My Son!" (Matthew 16.28-17.6; 2 Peter 1.16-18). In that day, he saw the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he knew that the Son of Man and the kingdom of the heavens are inseparable. Peter saw the goal that is

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

set before every believer. For this reason, Peter was determined not to neglect to remind the brethren of the road into the kingdom, which he called the abundant entrance into the kingdom. He had walked this road, and now he was about to be martyred for the testimony of his beloved Lord.

Before his departure, Peter shared on the mature knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. He had matured in this knowledge and had become the “mature” apostle. He had the knowledge and the experience to stand behind his words.

Epignosis—the mature knowledge.

In his second epistle, four times (2 Peter 1.2, 3, 8; 2.20) Peter used the Greek word *epignosis*, which means “the mature, superior, full knowledge.” This mature knowledge is a full knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus. It is not just facts about God, nor is it merely an understanding of the redemption and salvation that come through our Lord Jesus. It is a full knowledge of God and His purpose and plan, which center on His beloved Son, His coming kingdom, the calling out of a people to join Him in the reign of the heavens, and ultimately the restoration of all things in the heavens and on the earth. The mature knowledge is the word of the kingdom.

We must come into and live by the mature knowledge of God and His purpose and plan so that we may be counted worthy to attain unto the age that is coming. We must be fit to enter the kingdom and the reign of the heavens, and this requires that we practice the things that come through the mature knowledge. Peter saw that when the mature knowledge is diligently applied by faith, it leads to Christ-like character, fruitfulness, and the abundant entrance into the kingdom. This is why Peter immediately began to build upon faith through the mature, deeper, superior, after, above knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

Grace and peace multiplied in the mature knowledge.

Peter left a word with those who had received a faith of the same kind (like precious faith) as his. As the Lord’s people, we all receive a like measure of faith when we are born from above. It is by grace through faith that we are saved. This is an act of God and is manifested through our Lord.

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge [*epignosis*] of God and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Peter 1.1-2 NASB)

All who are saved have a measure of grace and peace, but Peter’s heart for the saints was to see this grace and peace multiplied. However, this increase comes in the mature knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. When we are first saved, there is no doubt that we have a measure of grace and peace in our lives; but this

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

measure is to grow, and it grows through mature knowledge. In fact, it is to be multiplied or to abound in us.

As we grow in our personal knowledge of our God, it leads us into a greater depth of relationship with Him and into an enlarged understanding of His purpose and plan. As we know Him and touch His heart, there is abundant grace for daily living and our hearts are filled with peace to endure the many trials and tribulations in our lives. We see the goal that is set before us and we endure to reach the end. We are filled with hope of the coming of the Lord (1 Peter 1.3-5), and this leads us into good works that bear fruit to His glory. In this way, we will not stumble on the road into the coming kingdom of Christ in the Tabernacles Age.

Life and godliness.

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge [epignosis] of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1.3 NASB)

God has called us by His own glory and excellence (virtue) into the true, mature knowledge of Him. Notice how Peter did not state that it is a true, mature knowledge but that it is *the* true, mature knowledge. There are many so-called truths in the world, but there is really only one truth, and it is centered on the God who calls us. The true, mature knowledge is to cause us to grow up and not remain as babes because God has a purpose in bringing us into a new birth from above. We are called to life and godliness, and He brings us into this place through His divine power.

What do life and godliness mean? In the Greek, the word *life* is *zoë*, which is life in its absolute fullness, and this life is in Christ. We are to walk according to this life. Our Lord came to give us an abundance of this life. It is His life.

“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have {it} abundantly.” (John 10.10 NASB)

This abundant life of Christ is to be manifested in godliness, which is piety or reverence. We are to have a godly walk in the fullness of life, and this is to be in accordance with the word of God. We are given everything necessary through the power of the Holy Spirit; and by the word of God implanted in us, we are to live and walk in a godlike manner in the world and before our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the fruit of the mature knowledge worked into our lives and lived out in our walk through this life. We must be like our Lord if we are to enter His kingdom (Hebrews 12.14; 1 Peter 1.16; 1 John 3.3). Thank God; He has given us everything pertaining to life and godliness, and it comes through the mature knowledge of Him.

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

Precious and magnificent promises.

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of {the} divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (2 Peter 1.4 NASB)

Peter continued to build upon the like precious faith and the mature knowledge. Through the word of God, we are given the precious and magnificent promises; but through the word, we also must come into the mature knowledge of Christ and walk in life and godliness. We have a divine nature in us (just like we have faith), but it can lie dormant (just like faith can). We are to become partakers of this divine, godly nature, having first escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. It was by the grace of God that first we were saved and through baptism made the confession that we were no longer of this world. In that day, the kingdom was set before us (John 3.5) as something which we must strive to enter. The world and its lust were left in the waters of baptism, and a new goal, based on a new hope, was set before us.

In his first letter, Peter declared: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to {obtain} an inheritance {which is} imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1.3-5 NASB).

For those who are born from above, there is a living hope that comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What is this hope? It is that we too will be raised from the dead, if we have fallen asleep in Jesus (meaning *salvation*) before He comes to sit upon His throne. Our hope is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1.27). His life will raise us up to meet Him in the air. Our hope is to be transformed into His likeness (Philippians 3.21; 1 John 3.2). This is our salvation to be revealed in the last time. If Christ was not raised from the dead, then we have no hope; but He was raised and we have a living hope. The tomb is empty and our Lord Jesus is alive. Our hope of resurrection and to reign with Him is the precious and magnificent promise for those who are found worthy to attain unto the coming age. The salvation to be revealed is the outcome of our faith—the salvation of our soul (1 Peter 1.9 NASB).

Applying all diligence.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in {your} moral excellence, knowledge; and in {your} knowledge, self-control, and in {your} self-control, perseverance, and in {your} perseverance, godliness; and in {your} godliness, brotherly kindness, and in {your} brotherly kindness, love. (2 Peter 1.5-7 NASB)

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

Peter was about to be martyred, as his Lord had told him. In his letter, he wrote that he was determined to be diligent in his last days on earth (1.15); and he exhorted the saints to be diligent as well (1.5; 3.14). Peter could be called the “diligent” apostle as well as the “maturing” apostle.

The Greek word *diligence* is *spoude*, which comes from another word, which means “speed.” Therefore, diligence has a certain urgency associated with it. We are to be eager to apply diligence and not to delay. As we approach the return of our beloved Lord, we are reminded to watch and pray (Matthew 24.42; 25.13; 26.38, 40-41; Mark 13.33-35, 37; 14.34, 37, 38; Luke 21.36), to be ready (Matthew 24.44; 25.10), to be sober (Luke 21.34; 1 Thessalonians 5.6, 8; 1 Peter 1.13; 4.7; 5.8) and to be faithful (Matthew 25.14-30; Luke 19.11-27). We too should have a sense of urgency, even more so as we see the day approaching.

In verses 5-11, Peter continued to build upon faith with a view to fruit bearing and entrance into the kingdom. We are to start with faith and abundantly build upon faith, based on the mature knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we do this, we will make our calling and choosing sure.

It is through the mature knowledge that we grow in spiritual character, which ultimately will lead us not to stumble but to enter the kingdom of our Lord. It will be an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

Faith.

The foundation of the abundant entrance is faith. It is the first of the building blocks, for without it, we have no structure upon which to build. What is faith? It is simply believing God. John frames faith in the context of the Lord’s command.

And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

(1 John 3.23 NASB)

Faith is believing in Jesus, believing in His name which is above every name in heaven and on earth. Faith tells us that our Lord is coming back and we must be ready, watching and waiting for His arrival and the ushering in of His glorious kingdom. As we will see according to Peter’s word, love is the result of faith. Faith drives toward the ultimate, which is the very love of God. It is love that will give us the confidence to stand before our Lord in the day of judgment (1 John 4.17).

Virtue.

We are exhorted to abundantly supply virtue in our faith. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we are to exercise virtue or, as some translators put it, (moral) excellence. The word *virtue* is a difficult word to translate; but if we allow the Scriptures to teach us, we will discover that virtue speaks of the very character of Christ worked in us. It is the excellence of Christ worked in our lives so that all we

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

do is excellent in character. Works that bear fruit are works that are done according to the character of Christ. The fact of the matter is that they are His works, for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God created beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2.10).

Virtue is found in only three places in Scripture. Peter used the word one other time in his epistle in relation to the mature knowledge: **As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue** (2 Peter 1.3 NKJ). Christ Himself has called us by glory and virtue, which leads us into the things that pertain to life and godliness. This verse gives us an indication of the meaning of virtue in reference to the Lord's life. We have no life and godliness apart from Him.

Now, if we look at the third place that virtue is used, we will see that virtue is the very character and nature of Christ. To the Philippians, Paul had poured out his most intimate and personal desire to know and to gain Christ. As he began to conclude his letter, he encouraged the saints in Christ Jesus to meditate on the things of virtue and that are worthy of praise.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Philippians 4.8 NKJ)

“If there is any virtue” refers to all the things Paul called the Philippians to dwell upon. If we want to know what virtue is, we need to understand these six things.

What is true? Christ is True. When He comes to reign over this earth, He will descend out of heaven, riding on a white horse. In that day, He will be called Faithful and True (Revelation 19.11). He is true to His word. All that He has promised to His people will come about in the eon (age) to come. He said He is coming back and He will come. As His people, we too are to be true in our actions and our words. It is His character to be true; and as we are conformed to His image, this same quality is to be ours.

What is noble? Psalm 45 speaks of the coming King and His Queen who will sit upon His throne.

And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the peoples fall under You. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions. All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad. (Psalm 45.4-8 NKJ)

“In Your majesty” speaks volumes of His nobility. He is the noble one. He will come to this earth in all His dignity and nobility. He is true, humble and righteous through and through. All His garments are a sweet aroma. How noble is our beloved Lord! Who can compare to Him? He alone is true nobility. He is the Majestic One. No earthly king will ever compare to the Majestic, Regal King of kings.

But where does this leave us? How can we be noble in this life? Is it possible? Yes, it is. As children of God, we are to grow up to be placed as sons. It is a process, a work going on inside of us that conforms us to His image; and this image is to be reflected in our lives. Even deeper than this is a hidden work that transforms us into His glory.

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3.18 NASB)

Glory speaks mightily of the nobility of Christ. We may not see the glory in us, for it is a treasure hidden in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4.4-7); but the more we see our beloved Lord and come into the mature knowledge of Him, the more we will be like Him. Glory is worked in our lives as we behold the face of Jesus Christ, and in some measure, it is to come forth from our lives. We are to be different from the world.

What is just? Christ is the Just One, the Righteous One (Acts 3.14; 7.52; 1 John 2.1). As we have seen in Psalm 45, His scepter is a scepter of righteousness, for His coming kingdom is one of righteousness and peace. In the day that He takes the scepter, there no longer will be unrighteous government on this earth. Praise God; we can stand before God, not because of our own righteousness but because of the righteousness that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In that day, we can enter His kingdom of righteousness by faith in the Righteous One. However, today we are called to live lives of righteousness. We are to practice righteousness, doing the righteous acts of the saints which form the wedding garment of the Wife of the Lamb (Matthew 22.2-14; 1 John 2.29; 3.7; Revelation 19.7-8).

What is pure? John exhorts us: **Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope {fixed} on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure** (1 John 3.2-3 NASB).

We have a hope set before us and it will be fulfilled in the day that our beloved Lord appears. When He appears, we will be like Him. But until that day, we are to purify ourselves as He is pure. Where does the purity start? It starts in our hearts;

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

and it is manifested in love—love of the brethren, just as Christ loved us by laying down His life for us.

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1.5 NASB)

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. (1 Peter 1.22 NASB)

What is lovely? Again, Psalm 45, which speaks of our coming King, reveals how lovely He is.

Thou art fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Thy lips; therefore God has blessed Thee forever. (Psalm 45.2 NASB)

He is fairer than the sons of men. There is no one more lovely than He is. What could be more lovely than His grace? He came as the One full of grace and truth, and we have received grace upon grace (John 1.14, 16). The words that pour forth from His lovely lips are grace. His very character is full of grace. He is the most gracious Person who has ever walked on this earth. How lovely is our beloved Lord Jesus! When He comes for His people, He will come with grace, for grace will be brought to us at the revelation of Him (1 Peter 1.13).

It is this grace and this loveliness which is to be a sweet aroma that comes forth from our lives. We are to be different from the people of the world. By faith, we are to receive the grace of the Lord and allow the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ to come forth in every place. Knowing Christ contains all the good things, and this knowing is to be manifested as a sweet aroma. As Paul wrote: **But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge (gnosis) of Him in every place** (2 Corinthians 2.14 NASB).

What is of good report? The Psalmist had a good theme on his heart and he had to write about it.

My heart overflows with a good theme; I address my verses to the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. (Psalm 45.1 NASB)

His good theme was about the King who is coming. He is our good news. We are to be those vessels that can speak of this good theme and, most of all, encourage our brethren to love and good deeds, so much more as we see the day approaching. We must remind each other that this day is coming.

If there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4.8 ASV). The things we are to think upon are our Lord Jesus. He is the virtues. They speak of Him alone. Where is our praise to be directed?

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever. (Psalm 45.17 NKJ)

We will praise Him forever and ever. For the eons to come, we will praise our King.

This is the meaning of virtue. To faith, believing in Jesus, we are to add virtue. We are to become like our Lord in character and nature. We are to be excellent in all our ways, as our Lord is excellent in all His ways. This is what it means to be conformed to His image. We are to be true, noble, righteous, pure, lovely, and of good report. Until His arrival, we are to be excellent in our ways. This is the character of our Lord.

Knowledge (gnosis).

We are to build upon this virtue with knowledge. In this case, the Greek word *gnosis* is used, which refers to basic knowledge rather than mature knowledge. We are to accumulate basic facts from the word that could, but not necessarily, lead to mature knowledge. Peter was impetuous, responding from impulse. What he lacked was knowledge. The Lord had taught him what he needed to know; particularly about His death and resurrection on the third day, but Peter failed each time to take in this knowledge. If he had, he would not have been rebuked by the Lord for being a stumbling block and would not have denied the Lord three times. Zeal without knowledge is most dangerous. Many young Christians have zeal but they lack knowledge. This is why, at the end of his life, Peter exhorted young people to submit themselves to their elders (1 Peter 5.5). Elders, the ones who are spiritually mature, are the ones who should have the knowledge to disciple the younger brethren to Christ and God's purpose and plan in Christ.

Self-Control.

Next, we are to abundantly supply self-control or temperance, which speaks of righteous living. This means we are to control our passions and desires that come from our flesh. We have been delivered from the corruption that is in the world by lust; therefore, we must come under the power of the Holy Spirit and not walk according to the flesh but walk according to the spirit; to walk as the new man, which was created in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4.24). This is accomplished as we allow the spirit of God to govern and control our lives. As we become partakers of the divine nature, we learn to come under the discipline of the spirit, and we exercise self-control over the lust of the flesh (1 Peter 2.11).

However, we are to have self-control over more than the carnal nature. There are many lawful things that we can do in the world, but are they profitable for the abundant entrance into the kingdom? Paul would not be mastered by anything, even if it was lawful (1 Corinthians 6.12). We too are to refrain from all things, good and bad, that do not bear fruit for reward in the Kingdom Age.

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

Patient endurance.

To self-control, we add perseverance or patient endurance. The Greek word for *patience* is *hupomone*, which means “to remain under.” In other words, we are to patiently endure (remain under) the trials and tribulations of this life. It is through patiently enduring the many trials of life that we will obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2.13-14; 1 Peter 5.10) and reign with Him (2 Timothy 2.12).

Godliness.

To patient endurance, we then add godliness, which also speaks of righteous living. Our walk in this life is to be in godliness. We are to be like God in love, to be imitators of God who is love, which will lead us to the remaining building blocks. As Paul wrote: “**Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma**” (Ephesians 5.1-2).

Brotherly kindness and love.

Godliness must lead to a walk in love, for this is the example that was set by our Lord Jesus. From godliness, we are to manifest brotherly love or affection for our brothers and sisters in Christ. The one who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4.21). **We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren; he who does not love his brother abides in death** (1 John 3.14 NKJ). The world is to know us by our love for one another.

Finally, we reach the ultimate goal, and that is **agape** love—divine, selfless love. Paul said that faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13.13). Love remains when all else passes away. If we know God, we must love. This is the height of our walk and character in Christ, for nothing can be added to it. It is all summed up in “God is love.”

Hope.

Actually, these eight qualities, which really are spiritual qualities or character formed in us by grace, speak of faith, hope, and love. We start with faith and end with love. But what drives us to abundantly supply these things? Is it not hope?

Hope is what causes us to pursue our on-high calling, to press on toward the goal. It is hope that causes us to come under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and allow the virtues to be worked into our lives. It is hope that causes us to dig into the word of God and come into a greater knowledge of what we have been called into and how to get there. It is hope for future reward that drives us to self-control so that our soul will be saved in the day that we appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It is hope that causes us to patiently endure the trials and tribulations of this life. Hope causes us to count it as all joy when we encounter various trials, for it is the

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

testing of faith which produces patience (James 1.2-3). In hope, we endure because it will bring about a perfect work so that we will lack nothing in the day of Christ. In hope, we exercise godliness while we endure trials. A world that has no real hope is watching our behavior in the midst of difficulties. Do they see a hope in us that causes them to ask the reason for our hope (1 Peter 3.15)? We are to be lights in the world and a sweet fragrance of Christ. Hope makes us shine and give off the aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2.14).

Finally, hope leads us to love our brethren in brotherly affection. As the Lord's people, we all are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been born from the same life, and we all have the same future set before us. We must encourage one another as we see the day of our Lord approaching. Why? Because hope tells us our King is coming, and He is coming to take the scepter of the kingdom over this earth. When He comes, He will receive His glorious body to His side in an intimate, friendly encounter.

Faith starts us down the road to the kingdom, as well as keeps us on it. Hope drives us to keep running and seeking an abundant entrance into the kingdom. Love is what motivates us, for God is love. Our beloved Lord has His loving, nail-scarred hands outstretched to us at the finish line of the race of the faith. Love beckons us to the one true love of our life—the One to whom we will be wed for the eons and beyond. What a tremendous hope we have in Jesus!

Fruitfulness.

For if these {qualities} are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge (*epignosis*) of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these {qualities} is blind {or} short-sighted, having forgotten {his} purification from his former sins. (2 Peter 1.8-9 NASB)

In these verses, Peter gets to the very heart of the issue in relation to the coming kingdom of Christ, and that is fruitfulness which comes from the Christ-like, godly character worked into our life. If these qualities are increasing and are ours, then we will not be useless or unfruitful in the true, mature (*epignosis*) knowledge of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter left us a warning. It is not enough to come into this knowledge that tells us that the Son of Man is coming in the glory of His Father to reign over this earth. We are to lay hold of this knowledge and continue to escape the pollution or corruption that is in the world through lust. We have been set free from all the encumbrances of the world. We are to be fruitful, and this fruitfulness comes through these qualities.

Another way of stating all of this is that once we come into the mature knowledge, we are to take the grace to allow the Holy Spirit to build the character of Christ in us. Through this character, we are to do the good works that are in Christ and bear fruit to the glory of God, which are the fruits of the spirit. It is very similar to what James wrote on faith. Faith without works is dead faith. Faith is to be active and

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

living, which leads to good works that bear fruit. To receive salvation, we are justified by faith; but to enter the kingdom, we are justified by works (James 2.20, 24).

When we see the glorious goal set before us, we will do all that we can to pursue this goal so that there will be an abundant entrance into the kingdom in that day. On the other hand, if we reject the mature knowledge, we place ourselves in a very serious position because we will be easily entangled in the things that the mature knowledge allows us to escape (Romans 1.28).

Later in his letter, Peter warned of false teachers and their deceptive words with which they allure through the lusts of the flesh. Follow closely Peter's exhortation concerning the rejection of the mature knowledge.

For speaking out arrogant {words} of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. (2 Peter 2.18-21 NASB)

These false teachers had once escaped the defilements of the world through the mature knowledge but became entangled in them again. They knew the way of righteousness and turned from it. They fell away from or cast away the faith, the belief that Jesus is Messiah and He will return to this earth in His kingdom and glory. They became apostates. Their last state was worse than when they were lost. In their apostasy, they turned from the word of the kingdom that perhaps has logged into their intellect, not their heart, and began asking, **"Where is the promise of His coming?"** (2 Peter 3.4).

Thus, Peter reveals to us how important mature knowledge is and how essential it is that we continue in this knowledge. If we have the eight qualities active in our lives, then we will not be unfruitful. The mature knowledge will work in our lives, with a view to the kingdom. If we do not have these qualities in our lives, then we are blind because we have forgotten our purification from our former sins. Our lives will be set on the things of this earth and not on the things above. We will not be pressing on toward our heavenly or celestial calling.

Oh dear brethren, the mature knowledge is essential for our spiritual growth. We are to grow up to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4.13). As we do, we will be fruitful in a way that will be pleasing

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

to our Lord, and we will receive reward in the day of His judgment and coming kingdom.

Calling and choosing.

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble. (2 Peter 1.10 NASB)

Peter continued to encourage those of like precious faith to diligence, to make speed, in regard to their calling and choosing (election). Peter had learned his lesson. He had fallen along the way, but he had come into the mature knowledge that would assure him an entrance if he kept his diligence.

Jesus said that many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22.14). Actually, the literal translation of this verse is: “**Many are called, but few are called out.**” All believers are called; but few will be chosen because they will have neglected so great a salvation (Hebrew 2.3), which is the mature knowledge. Being “called out” has to do with the kingdom. We are exhorted to follow a certain course that will lead to the salvation of our soul and our coming into the very purpose of our calling. The call is to the kingdom, but we are to make sure of this call that we will be called out in the day we appear before the Lord. Our longing should be to be called out of the called and to be placed as co-heirs or sons with Christ in His kingdom (Romans 8.17). This is very similar to our Lord’s words about those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead (Luke 20.35); Paul’s heart to attain to the *out*-resurrection from among the dead (Philippians 3.11); and John’s vision of those who are blessed and holy who have a part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20.4-6).

How do we make certain our calling and choosing? We do it by practicing these things, these qualities—from faith to love—under the leadership of the spirit of God. If we do, we will not stumble; we will not fall away like the apostates and others who have been deceived by them. We must be diligent in these days. We have been warned, but are we willing to be diligent? Peter wrote: “**Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder)**” (2 Peter 3.1 NKJ). We need to be stirred up by way of reminder. The kingdom of the Son awaits all who are diligent and faithful to the end.

Abundantly supplied to you.

For thus will be richly supplied to you the entrance into the eonian kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus. (2 Peter 1.11 CV)

If we follow this course, we will not stumble. *Stumble* means to fall and not make it the rest of the way. The course laid out by Peter according to the mature

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

knowledge will give us an entrance into the eonian (of the age) kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We need to be reminded that Peter is not referring to immortality that all who believe are promised in Christ. He is referring to who will be counted worthy to enter the coming kingdom of Christ to reign with Him during the 1,000-year (millennial) eon, which is called the Kingdom or Tabernacles Age.

Some will not be found worthy to reign with Christ during His millennial kingdom. They will not participate in the first resurrection or the out-resurrection, and will have to wait until the great white throne judgment that precedes God's day to put on immortality. They will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3.15).

The word *entrance* means "a road into," and this road will ensure that we make our calling and calling out sure. This road will lead us into the kingdom by the narrow gate and not the broad one that leads to destruction (Matthew 7.13).

All who call upon the Lord in this eon have the kingdom of the Son set before them, but how many will take the narrow gate to enter the kingdom? Paul said that we must compete by the rules, just like an athlete competing for the prize (2 Timothy 2.5). We must run this race of the faith (2 Timothy 4.7), and Peter has given us the way to run so that we will have that assurance of entering the kingdom. It is the way of the abundant entrance. It comes through the mature knowledge of Christ. It comes through knowledge of the King and His coming kingdom. It comes through diligently laying hold of and increasing in the character of Christ. It comes through fruitfulness that brings glory to God (John 15.8).

Peter made known to those of like precious faith the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1.16). He did not follow cunningly devised fables when he made this known. He was an eyewitness of the coming kingdom (Matthew 17.1-5). He saw the Son of God standing in glory on the holy mount. He heard the Majestic Glory declare: "**This is My Son!**" (2 Peter 1.17). Peter and the other two disciples saw the kingdom and glory. They saw the King of kings in glory. It is like Isaiah when he saw the Lord sitting on a throne. He had to declare: "**For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts**" (Isaiah 6.5 NASB).

Peter not only saw this kingdom, but he has left us the instructions for how to stay on the road into the kingdom.

It is time for Christians to learn that there is purpose for their salvation. We are not saved to go to heaven and do some vague things. We are saved and called to take up positions as joint heirs with Christ in the administration of His coming kingdom. The government will rest upon His shoulders; and He is calling out a people to be His complement (fullness) to reign with Him in His millennial kingdom. We are being offered crowns in His kingdom, if they run the race of the faith and reach the finish line. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2.12).

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

In conclusion, let us meditate upon Peter's last words given to the ecclesia of God. This is the heart of the one who stumbled early in his walk with the Lord but who at the end of his life had come into the mature knowledge. The "mature" apostle was diligent to leave us a word of exhortation and encouragement.

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord {to be} salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all {his} letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as {they do} also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him {be} the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3.14-18 NASB)

Let us grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us supply all diligence.

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

THE ABUNDANT ENTRANCE

Mature (*Epignosis*) Knowledge of Christ

(2 Peter 1.2-16)

- ↳ Brings greater measure of **grace & peace** (multiplied to you)
- ↳ Reveals the exceedingly **great & precious promises** (which have been given to us *in Christ*)
- ↳ Leads us to become partakers (companions) of the **divine nature** (life & godliness) by His **divine power**
- ↳ Exhorts us to be **diligent to build on faith**, adding virtue (moral excellence), knowledge (*gnosis*), self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love (*agape*)
- ↳ Leads us to **fruitfulness** in reference to our **election & calling** (calling [*called*] & calling-out [*chosen*])
- ↳ Provides us an abundant entrance (road) into **the kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (in the day of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ) [**the PRIZE!**]

SUPPLYING ALL DILIGENCE

Scripture Abbreviations:

ASV	American Standard Version
CV	Concordant Version (Literal New Testament)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NKJ	New King James Bible

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