

Sunday November 28th 2010
The Second of Peter
Part Two

1). 2Pe 2:1 ¶ *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.*

a). We had seen last week how the Book of 2 Peter moves on from teaching concerning the salvation of the soul in 1 Peter to teaching concerning faith with regards to the salvation of the soul and apostasy with regards to the salvation of the soul; and how putting these two letters of 1+2 Peter together gives us God's complete revelation to the original recipients of Peter's letter and by extension to ourselves also.

b). We had also noted how this pattern seen in 1 + 2 Peter is the same pattern found in the NT epistles as a whole with the salvation of the soul being taught in the letters of Romans through 3 John and then faith with regards to this salvation and apostasy with regards to this salvation then taught in the Book of Jude, the last of the NT epistles, the Book that leads us into the events of the Judgment Seat of Christ and beyond which are recorded in the Book of Revelation.

c). And we realized from this that because of the work of the tares sown amongst the wheat introducing the leaven into the 3 measures of meal at the beginning of this dispensation, as prophetically recorded in the Matthew 13 parables, it is entirely logical and inevitable that the NT epistles as a whole should conclude with serious warnings about apostasy from the faith as this is the direction that the Church generally was inescapably headed.

2). Mt 13:23 *"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."* 24 ¶ *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 "but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 "But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.*

a). We will remember that as a direct response to those who hear the word of the Kingdom and begin to produce fruit the tares are sown amongst them with a message that distorts the word of truth thereby resulting in a standing away from

the faith by those who would follow their message with a subsequent stopping of their fruit production, the very purpose for which the tares are there in the first place.

b). And if we think about this logically, for anyone and everyone who hears the word of the Kingdom and begins to produce fruit it would have to be a standing away from the faith that would pose the greatest danger to them as this would stop their fruit production, and inevitably this barrenness with regards to fruit production would have to come about through some distortion of the word that would make this possible resulting in their exclusion from the Kingdom in the age to come.

c). On a personal level, for all of us, we will either continue to run the race of the faith, according to the rules, to win the crown or we will stand away from the faith and lose the salvation of our soul in the age to come – there is no middle ground in this. And it will be for this reason that the scriptures are replete with warnings about standing away from the faith.

d). This is exactly what happened with the nation of Israel and the very reason they are given to us as an example - 1Co 10:11 *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

3). Jude 1:1 ¶ *Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: 2 Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. 3 ¶ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

a). And so within the context of and within the foreknowledge of the ultimately completely leavened state of the word of the Kingdom we find the Holy Spirit through Jude exhorting his readers to contend earnestly for the faith.

b). Given the inevitability of the Laodicean condition of the church at the end of this dispensation and the prevalence of the wholesale apostasy that would bring this about we will realize that to contend earnestly for the faith is not just a good idea, but the battle of our life.

c). So, exactly what would it mean for us ‘to contend earnestly for the faith’?

d). Well, firstly, let’s remember that ‘the faith’ is a phrase that exclusively refers to the word of the Kingdom and all that it encompasses with regards to the salvation of the soul and the age to come. And so, ‘to contend earnestly for the faith’ has nothing to do with giving a defense of the great Christian doctrines such as Christ’s divinity and the virgin birth, salvation by grace through faith etc. And

nor does it have anything to do with giving a defense of the word of the Kingdom, but rather it has to do with our personal race of faith in a day corrupted by apostasy.

4). The word translated, ‘contend earnestly for the faith’ is the Greek word ‘epagonizomai’ – and interestingly enough this is the only place in the NT where this word is used.

a). It is a compound word made up of the prefix ‘epi’ and the word ‘agonizomai’ – a word from which we get our English word ‘agonize’.

b). The prefix ‘epi’ intensifies the word it is attached to and is the same prefix attached to the word ‘gnosis’ that gives us the word ‘epignosis’ that we had looked at in detail last week.

c). ‘agonizomai’ = to struggle, literally (to compete for a prize), figuratively (to contend with an adversary), or genitive case (to endeavor to accomplish something):--fight, labor fervently, strive.

d). It is found in 1 Corinthians with regards to competing in the race of the faith – 1Co 9:24 ¶ *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes [agonizomai] for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

e). It is found with regards to fighting for the faith in - 1Ti 6:12 *Fight [agonizomai] the good fight of faith, lay hold on age lasting life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

f). And similarly in - 2Ti 4:7 *I have fought [agonizomai] the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

g). The context of our scriptures here show us quite clearly that we are dealing with earnestly striving in a contest that will lead to reward or loss in the age to come.

h). And so the word ‘epagonizomai’ speaks of straining every fiber of our being as we participate in the contest for the salvation of our soul according to the rules.

i). And this must be done, given the context of Jude, because of the rampant apostasy that would seek to destroy God’s purpose for His Church.

5). Now, let's remember that Jude and 2 Peter are companion letters and each provides commentary on the other. With that in mind let's go back to the beginning of 2 Peter - 2Pe 1:1 ¶ *Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 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, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 ¶ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

a) Again we will remember from last week that our study of 'epignosis', the mature knowledge of God's son, as seen in the first 4 verses, showed us that 'epignosis' results in the realization of possessing 'all things that pertain to life and godliness'v3.

b). Life = Greek – 'zoe' = the fullness of life in the present.

c). Godliness = Greek – 'eusebeia' = piety or reverence

d). So this is a God reverencing walk in the fullness of life appropriating that which God has for man, which is revealed in His word.

e). And 'epignosis', the mature knowledge of God's Son results in the realization of possessing 'great and precious promises'v4. And it is through these 'great and precious promises', which are revealed in God's word, that we become 'partakers of the divine nature' having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

f). The 'divine nature' has been planted within the inner being of every Christian, and just like faith it can be dormant or very active. And to ensure that the 'divine nature' along with faith do not lie dormant within us we must choose to lay aside the things having to do with corruption in the world and receive the word of God into our saved human spirit as described in - Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

g). It is the receiving of this word, after this fashion recorded in James, and the corresponding work of the Holy Spirit alone which then brings us into the position where spiritual growth takes place, partaking of the 'divine nature' becomes a reality and victory over the world the flesh and the devil will come to pass.

6). V5 then continues - 5 ¶ *But also for this very reason,because of that which we have just seen in v1-4, things resulting from a mature 'epignosis' knowledge of God even Jesus our Lord we are exhorted - giving all diligence, add to your faith*

a). Diligence = Greek – 'spoude' = "speed", i.e. (by implication) despatch, eagerness, earnestness:--business, (earnest) care(-fulness), diligence, forwardness, haste.

b). And what we find here in v5-7 is a progressive process towards maturity that must begin with faith as its foundation that will result in fruit production within our mature knowledge of 'our Lord Jesus Christ', and this will in turn ultimately result in an abundant entrance *into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. And this process towards maturity with its subsequent results, if properly followed, is scriptures own commentary on 'contending earnestly for the faith' from the Book of Jude.

c). We would have to remember though when looking at this that there are many other scriptures that must be factored into this process, not the least of which would be all that we have studied in 1 Peter, as well as other related scriptures to do with dying to our flesh and walking in the Spirit.

d). Then as we consider the exhortation to 'add to your faith' we might be reminded of - 1Co 3:11 ¶ *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

e). Adding to our faith in 2 Peter and building on the foundation in 1 Corinthians would be one and the same thing, with those things added in Peter being the works of gold, silver and precious stones in Corinthians.

f). Every one of us is in possession of faith, *by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*: and this faith can be very active or very weak and this weakness can be of such a degree as to be described like this in James – Jas 2:17 *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

g). No matter how weak our faith may be it can never pass away as it is always present in the believer, but it can be barren and therefore unfruitful which is exactly how we should understand the word ‘dead’ in James. The literal thought in James would be ‘faith without works produces no fruit’. And a failure to produce fruit will result in us ‘suffering loss’ when our works are tested by fire; but on the other hand producing fruit will result in us receiving a ‘reward’ – faith will have been brought to its goal and - 1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

7). 5 ¶ *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,*

a). And so with faith as our foundation we are to ‘add to your faith virtue’ – the phrase ‘add to’ is not really an adequate translation of the Greek word here as it does not provide the intensity that the original word conveys.

b). Add to = Greek – ‘epichoregeo’ = abundantly supply – and this is how ‘add to’ needs to be understood throughout v5-7.

c). The first thing then that we are to abundantly supply in our faith is virtue.

d). Virtue = Greek – ‘arete’ = properly, manliness (valor), i.e. excellence (intrinsic or attributed):--praise, virtue.

e). Virtue is a word that has to do with moral excellence and when used relative to God it has to do with God’s power and so the thought in this verse has to do with Christians exercising moral excellence under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and in doing so God’s power would be active in their life – we can see this in operation in - 1Pe 1:5 *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

f). We are then to abundantly supply in our virtue, knowledge.

g). Knowledge = Greek ‘gnosis’ = the accumulation of facts with a view to knowing.

h). We are then to continue to accumulate all the facts that we can concerning Christ and His coming Kingdom, and this would include things like our attempting to understand words from the original languages that would give us additional insight into what is written. Gnosis can lead to epignosis, but this is not necessarily so.

8). 6 *to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,*

a). To our knowledge we are to abundantly supply ‘self-control’

b). Self-control = Greek – ‘egkrateia’ = self-control (especially continence):-
-temperance.

c). This is a word that means having ‘mastery over oneself’ – keeping the passions and desires of the man of flesh in check; and this is accomplished through allowing the Holy Spirit to govern and control our lives, which would again take us back to God’s power that we saw in connection with virtue earlier.

d). And then we are to abundantly supply in our self-control, ‘patience’

e). Patience = Greek – ‘hupomone’ = patient endurance

f). We could best understand this word by looking at how its verb form is used in - Jas 1:12 *Blessed is the man who [patiently] endures [hupomeno] temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

g). And it would be pretty obvious to see why patient endurance needs to be abundantly supplied in our self-control as we battle to keep the passions and desires of the man of flesh in check in order to allow the Holy Spirit to govern and control our lives. There will be many ‘temptations’ that we will have to patiently endure as we choose to die to our flesh and walk in the Spirit. But please notice in James what awaits the person who does so.

h). And we are to abundantly supply in our patient endurance, ‘godliness’

i). Godliness = Greek – ‘eusebeia’ from ‘eusebes’ = well-reverent, i.e. pious:--devout, godly

j). And so, as we patiently endure the trials and testings of life we are to do so with an abundance of piety and reverence. In other words we put into practice those things we have already looked at acknowledging that we know who God is, what He expects of us and what He has promised us. In this word then is the acknowledgment of our complete dependence on God as our source and our hope and our complete submission to Him as His bondservant. It is keeping God in the right place in our lives in every circumstance on every occasion.

k). All that we see in this process progressively builds on that which has gone before.

9). *7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

a). Then to godliness we are to abundantly supply, ‘brotherly kindness’.

b). Brotherly kindness = Greek – ‘philadelphia’ = fraternal affection:-- brotherly love (kindness), love of the brethren.

c). Again here we will see that abundantly supplying brotherly kindness, that is the ‘phileo’ love of being around and keeping company with those who are of a like mind, is not automatic, but a stage in the process – something we had already noted from our study of 1 Peter - 1Pe 1:22 *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,*

d). Purifying our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit would give us a good description of the progressive process we are currently looking at.

e). And when considering ‘brotherly kindness’ we would also need to remember the definition the Lord gave us as to who our ‘brother’ is –

Mt 12:47 Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." 48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

Mt 7:21 ¶ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

f). And then in our brotherly love we are to abundantly supply, ‘love’.

g). Love = Greek – ‘agape’ = the divine love which God is in His nature and character.

h). 1Jo 4:7 ¶ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

i). Once again, ‘agape’ love for one another is not an automatic and nor can we will ourselves to do it. Agape is the highest form of love attainable and is a love that is produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of the faithful believer – the one who has abundantly supplied in his faith in our process. It has to be supplied last because it is placed at the height of the Christian experience and nothing more can be added to it.

j). This is exactly what we see in 1 Peter 1:22 and repeated again in 1 John 4:7-8

k). We don’t attain agape love apart from the process and we don’t participate in the process apart from the metamorphosis that is worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the ‘epignosis’ of God, even Jesus our Lord.

10). 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

a). When we read the beginning of this verse, ‘For if these things are yours...’ in the original language we go beyond the simple idea of ‘if you have these’ to the thought of ‘these things are expected to be your natural possession’ as a result of being a partaker of the divine nature. Nor should these things ebb and flow in our life, but remain a constant that is ever increasing.

b). If we allow the work of the Holy Spirit in our life through the process we have just looked at then not only will those things seen in the process be our natural possession but they will also abound in us, they will be there in our life

now in abundance. And as a consequence of this we will be neither barren nor unfruitful as we continue to press on and develop towards, with the view of finally reaching, the fullness of the ‘epignosis’ knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

c). How amazing it is to think that no matter how much mature knowledge we may have at the present if we will continue to contend earnestly for the faith so that knowledge will increase in the midst of our fruitfulness which will also continue to increase - Joh 15:5 *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

d). Pr 11:30 ¶ *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.*

9). 9 *For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

a). ‘For he who lacks these things’ in the original language draws a contrast between those for whom these things are their natural possession as a result of partaking of the divine nature and those with whom these things are merely present but not of their possession.

b). The one who lacks these things is described as ‘short sighted, even to blindness’ and we can understand this as an inability, through choice, to see beyond the present – to look with the eyes of the flesh and not the eyes of the Spirit. Short sighted literally has to do with screwing up the eyes against a bright light so as not to look at it. And in this we might be reminded of - 2Co 4:3 *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

c). For this person they have chosen to forget that they were cleansed from their old sins, being entangled again by them and enslaved to them.

d). This then would be the one without, or has turned away from, or has wanted to add to, the epignosis knowledge that, through the great and precious promises, would have set them free from the corruption that is in the world enabling them to see that to which they are blind.

e). Ro 6:16 *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*

10). Because of this Peter then exhorts us - *10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

a). And this we will continue with next week if the Lord is willing.