

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 16 August 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Don't Forget Why You're Here!

2 Peter 1:5-9

When I was in my third year of ministerial training at Pensacola Christian College, I had a roommate named Paul. Paul had arrived on campus a couple days earlier than I had arrived that autumn; so, he got first claim to the lower bunk in one of the two bunk beds. The other lower bunk was already claimed, as well; so, I slept in the bunk above Paul's bunk that semester.

Well, one afternoon, after I had returned from a long shift at A Beka print shop, I was exceptionally tired, and I decided to take a short nap. However, I didn't feel as though I had the energy to climb into my upper bunk. So, I presumed upon my roommate's goodness, grabbed my own pillow, and lay down on his bunk for about twenty minutes. However, before I drifted off to sleep, my eye was captured by a little sticky note that Paul had attached to the side of the dresser, in a spot where he could see it immediately upon waking up every morning. It was a memo to himself; and it read, "**Don't forget to study today. That's why you are here.**"

I couldn't help but chuckle when I read this note. How could you possibly forget why you are at college, when you've travelled hundreds of miles to get there; when you've worked long hours to pay for your education; and when you've spent every spare penny to pay your school bill? Sadly, I must confess that I knew some people who *did* seem to have trouble remembering why they were there. They would do all kinds of sports and recreational activities. You'd always see them at the ping-pong table in the Commons, or at the bowling alley, or hanging around with friends, and talking; but they didn't spend much time studying. There were some people on campus who spent so much time socialising, that they would always fail a course or two every semester; and they ended up paying for several more years of schooling before they finally managed to graduate. We called them "professional students." (Although the word "student" seems to be a bit of a misnomer!)

Sadly, this is the way it can become (and, in fact, often *is*) in the lives of many Christians. It is very easy for us, as Christians, to forget why *we* are here. If you are saved, why *are* you here? Did Christ save you so that you might spend eternity with Him in heaven? Yes, in part; but that is only part of the reason why He saved you. Christ forgave you, and saved you, so that the power of sin might be broken in your life. He saved you so that He might take the throne of your life. He saved you so that you, through His empowerment, might serve Him with all your might, in every area of your life. He saved you so that you might imitate His holy character. He saved you so that you might be *spiritually fruitful*. God wants you to bring forth spiritual fruit which is glorifying to Him.

Have *you* forgotten why you are here, Christian? Probably every Christian in this room would hasten to say, "Yes, I remember why I'm here." However, the measure of spiritual fruit that you are producing in your life is the tell-tale sign of whether you *really* remember the purpose of your salvation, or whether you have forgotten it. Today, we will be looking at the spiritual qualities that should be in Christian's lives. The title of this message is ***Don't Forget Why You're Here!***

Read 2 Peter 1:5-9.

I. The purpose of salvation: spiritual fruitfulness (vv. 5-8)

In these verses, Peter lists eight spiritual graces which should be present in every Christian's life. These graces are **faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity**. Now, these graces are all interconnected; and they *build* upon each other. You can't pick and choose which graces you wish to have. For example, you cannot say, "I'm not doing so well in the 'faith' department. My faith is pretty small. But, hey, I *do* have brotherly kindness!" No, it doesn't work that way. All these graces go together. They are *built upon* each other; and they all rest upon the foundation of *faith*.

I wish to examine these eight graces this morning. In fact, we will be examining them individually, and in much more detail, over the coming weeks. However, before we begin to look at these eight graces, let's skip ahead to **verse 8**, and see how Peter sums up God's purpose for the Christian life. (**Read verse 8 again.**)

Peter says that if "**these things**" (in other word, these eight spiritual graces) be in you, then you will *not* be unfruitful in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. If faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are abounding in your life, then you *will* be fruitful in your "**knowledge of**" (relationship with) the Lord!

Christian, God's whole purpose in saving you was, first of all, **that you might have an intimate, passionate relationship with Him**; and secondly, that **you might bear spiritual fruit**. God doesn't want to see a *little* spiritual fruit, either. He wants your life to "abound" with these graces. He wants your life to be filled to overflowing with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. However, in order for Him to produce these things in your life, you must *let* Him do so. You must abide in Him.

Read John 15:1-8.

Christ makes it very clear: those who do not bring forth *any* spiritual fruit in their lives are people who have never had a relationship with Him. They are not "abiding" in Christ at all, because they are not saved. Tragically, those who never entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ will, at the moment of death, be removed and cast forth into the "**fire**" (in other words, "hell"). On the other hand, those who have entered into a relationship with Christ will produce spiritual fruit, because they are connected to the Vine.

Now, here is the important question, Christian: "**How much** spiritual fruit are you producing?" The quantity of fruit that you are producing depends on how firmly you are abiding in Christ, and on how deeply you are drawing spiritual nourishment from Him. The Lord doesn't want a *little* fruit in your life. He wants you to "bear much fruit." Let's look at another Scripture.

Read Mark 11:12-14, 20-21.

This is a very interesting account. It is particularly interesting because this happens to be the only miracle of *judgment* that Jesus ever performed during His earthly ministry. In every other miracle that Jesus performed, He *healed*, and *helped*, and *made* whole; but in this miracle, He *destroyed*. Why? Why did Jesus curse this fig tree? After all, it wasn't yet the

time of year for figs to sprout. It was time for the *leaves* to be on the fig trees; but it wasn't time for the fruit yet. So, why did Jesus curse it?

Well, Jesus was making an illustration. He was illustrating Israel's lack of spiritual fruitfulness. Here it was, only a few days prior to Jesus' death on the cross. His mission on earth was nearly finished. Yet, after 3 ½ years, the nation of Israel *still* was not bringing forth spiritual fruit. Christ had laboured day and night to minister to them. He had laboured to gather the people unto their God, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. He had warned them again and again to repent and believe on Him, because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Yet, with precious few exceptions, the people would not believe on Him. Yes, they liked to see Him do miracles; and they were all about receiving free bread. However, they weren't interested in repenting and turning to Him as their Saviour.

Now, as a nation, Israel produced plenty of "leaves." In other words, they made a great outward *show* of religion. Yet, after 3 ½ years of Jesus' preaching, they were still producing no fruit of faith and repentance. After 3 ½ years, it was high time for the nation to be producing spiritual fruit; but they were not doing so. Because they were still unprofitable to God, they were now under God's curse; and Jesus' cursing of the fig tree illustrates this fact.

Think of that! The very people who were God's nation were now *curse*d (at least, for the duration of this present church age). By cursing the fig tree Jesus was saying, "All right, Israel. Your time's up. You won't believe on me, and bring forth fruit; so your days are numbered. You're good at bringing forth *leaves*. You have an outward *form* of godliness; but you are *unprofitable to Me*. I am going to set you aside, and give the Kingdom of God to those who *will* bring forth fruit."

By the way, God is *not* done with the nation of Israel. God *will* restore them in the future, after they, as a nation, have repented and believed on their Messiah. However, there is an application that we, as New Testament age believers, can draw from this. The application is that God desires *fruitfulness* in His people. The church is not Israel; but we who have believed on Christ *are* His people in this church age. Just as God expected spiritual fruit from Israel, He expects spiritual fruit of us. He desires that we be profitable to Him.

Now, if you're not saved, you're like a fig tree that produces leaves, but no fruit. You may *look* outwardly religious and virtuous; but you are unprofitable to God. You do not know Him; and you are bearing no true spiritual fruit. On the other hand, if you *are* truly saved, there *will* be a measure of spiritual fruitfulness in your life. However, God doesn't want you merely to produce a little fruit here and there. He wants you to *abound* with fruit.

With this in mind, let's examine the fruit. As I mentioned, we will be looking closely at each one of these spiritual graces over the coming weeks. However, before we do, I would like us to do an overview of all these fruits. First of all, Peter urges every Christian to give "***all diligence***" to add "***virtue***" to your faith. Now, we'll get to the "***virtue***" in just a moment. However, we must first look at "***faith***." Faith is the foundation upon which virtue (and all these other graces) are built. **(Read 2 Peter 1:5 again.)**

The Christian life begins with, and continues to be built upon, *faith*. All these other graces must be built upon the foundation of faith. Without faith, you cannot have virtue, knowledge,

temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, or charity. In order to produce these virtues, you must be growing in faith. Let's see what Paul said about this.

Read Romans 1:16-17.

What does Paul mean when he says that *“the righteousness of God”* is revealed from *“faith to faith”*? He is saying that God wants His people to move from one level of faith to another. If you are a child of God, then you were saved by faith. That is how your Christian life began. There was a day when you stopped trusting in your own righteousness, and you instead placed your faith in *“the righteousness of God”* (Christ's righteousness). You were carried over from spiritual death to spiritual life by placing your *faith* in the Son of God. You were born again by believing the “Gospel”—the message of salvation through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. However, that was merely the beginning of your faith. God now wants you to live your new life by faith every single day. He doesn't want you to trust Him merely to get you to Heaven one day; He wants you to trust Him in *every area* of your life.

Now, let's get practical. Our missions conference is coming up soon. Redemption Baptist Church is currently supporting four missionaries; and our missionaries are taking the Gospel to folks that we cannot reach. However, our heart's desire, as a church, should be to do even more to reach our world for Christ. Are you willing to stretch your faith in your missions giving in this coming year? Giving to missions is an opportunity for you to grow in faith. Are you trusting God in the area of tithing? How about in your witness to the lost? Do you boldly proclaim the Gospel to lost people? Or are you ashamed to mention the Gospel to others? The Apostle Paul wasn't ashamed; and neither should any child of God be ashamed. How about in your personal life, and in your homelife? Are you failing to order your family and home according to God's Word? Are you reluctant to throw out “idols” from your life, and from your home? I'm not talking about images of wood and stone, which people literally bow down and worship. (That's a given!) I'm talking about anything that you love and cherish more than God, and which is hindering you from growing spiritually. Perhaps it is a worldly television show, or worldly movies. Perhaps it is worldly music, or worldly novels. Perhaps it is a hobby or recreation which, though not sinful in itself, is hindering you from taking time to read your Bible, and to pray, and to have real fellowship with God.

The Christian life starts with faith, and it must be lived by faith. However, it doesn't stop there. Peter says that as we grow in faith, we should be adding to our faith *“virtue.”* (**Read 2 Peter 1:5 again.**) Now, what, exactly, is *“virtue”*? Well, the Greek word for *“virtue”* has the idea of “manliness,” “courage,” or “justice.” It has the idea of being courageous to do the right thing, and to perform good works. If you be living your life by faith, and not by sight, then you *will* have the manliness and courage to do what is right, regardless of what the circumstances are around you. If you have *“virtue,”* then you will do what's right, even if you must stand *alone* for what is right. (Very often, that is *exactly* what you must do!) Let's compare this to another Scripture.

Read Titus 3:8.

God wants us to live by faith; and He wants us to add to our faith *“virtue”*; and to virtue He wants us to add *“knowledge.”* (**Read 2 Peter 1:5 again.**)

Now, what kind of knowledge is Peter talking about? He's talking about the *knowledge of God's Word*. However, he's not talking merely about having a *head* full of Bible verses, and doctrines, and Scriptural teaching. The whole point of having knowledge is to have *discretion*. The Bible often links discretion with knowledge. Discretion is the *application* of knowledge to real-life situations. In the Old Testament, "discretion" is translated from the Hebrew word *m'zimmah*, which literally means "plan." It can mean an *evil* plan, or an evil invention; but in many contexts, it means a *wise and sagacious* plan. To have discretion means to know what direction to take in life. It means to know how to conduct yourself in a given situation. It means to know the appropriate time to take certain courses of action. "Wisdom" and "prudence" are similar words, as well. God wants us to have discretion, wisdom, and prudence. True knowledge is the knowledge of the God's will; but discretion (or "wisdom," or "prudence") is the *application* of God's will to daily situations.

Read Proverbs 1:1-4.

Read Ephesians 1:8-9.

Christian, get into God's Word, and seek His knowledge! Don't waste your time digging up "knowledge" that is of no spiritual profit to you, or to anyone else. Paul commanded Timothy to instruct pastors (and all believers) not to "*strive*" about words that are of "*no profit*," but which tend instead to the "*subverting* (or "weakening") *of the hearers*" (2 Timothy 2:14). He also commanded Titus to "*avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain* (empty, pointless)" (Titus 3:9). There are very weighty matters that you must face every day, Christian; and the only way that you will know how to address them is to know this Book! Don't build your life upon what the Bible *doesn't* say, or upon what you *presume* that it should say. Don't fill your mind with pointless knowledge that is not clearly rooted in God's Word. There is plenty of this kind of pointless "knowledge" out there, which crafty teachers have made into doctrines; and these doctrines usually undermine (or, at best, detract from) the clear teachings of God's Word. Take, for example, the "Bible Code." The "Bible Code" is the idea that there are secret messages and prophecies that are encoded, like cross-word puzzles, in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and that they can be found only when the entire text is laid out in a giant grid pattern, with a computer programme. My friends, nowhere does God give the slightest hint that we must seek "hidden messages" or "hidden codes" beyond the plain text of Scripture! (If there *were* such messages to be found, then it would mean that for thousands of years before the invention of computers, God's people didn't really have all of God's Word!)

Brethren, this is utter foolishness. Yet, many Christians are sucked into these kinds of things. Why? Oftentimes, it's because they don't have much passion or zeal for the *actual words* of Scripture; and they are not committed to study it for themselves. Instead, they would rather seek "hidden" codes which an "expert" on YouTube is putting forth. Sadly, Christians who get caught up in such things often become puffed up in pride, because they think that they "know" something that others don't—when, in fact, they are spiritually impoverished. Christian, fill your mind with the clear instructions of God's Word, and then *submit* to them, so that that you may live a life that is profitable to God, and to others.

The next spiritual grace that should be added to our lives is "*temperance*." (Read 2 Peter 1:6 again.) What is temperance? Temperance is being moderate in your use of the things of this

life. A Christian who is exercising faith, virtue, and knowledge will not place great importance on temporal things of this life. He will not love, or give undue importance to, things such as food, drink, sleep, relaxation, recreation, hobbies, clothing, houses, money, physical fitness, health, family, or any other thing of this life. Now, do we *need* these things? In some cases, “yes.” Some of these things are definite needs. Others are helpful, but are not absolutely necessary. However, Jesus commands us not to worry about what we will eat, or drink, or wear (even though these are *needs*)! Rather, He said, **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”** Paul said that bodily exercise profits little; but godliness is profitable unto all things (**1 Timothy 4:8**). Jesus said that he that loveth father, mother, wife, son, or daughter more than Himself is not worthy of Him (**Matthew 10:37**). As important as bodily exercise is, and as important as family relationships are, these things must never replace our fellowship with the Lord. The Lord *must* come first! Look at everything in light of eternity, Christian! Be moderate in the things of this life. Regard them as tools; but do not cling to them. Cling to Christ!

The next spiritual grace that we must add to our lives is **“patience.”** (**Read 2 Peter 1:5-6 again.**) Christian, if you have developed **“temperance”** in your life—if you have the right perspective on earthly wants and needs (namely, that these things are going to pass away, and that we must not seek after them)—then you will be able to exercise patience. You won’t get angry and “blow up” when things aren’t going just right in your life. You won’t blame God and others when your earthly wants or needs aren’t being met in the way that you think they should be met, or as speedily as you think they should be met. Instead, you will patiently wait on God, and eagerly anticipate how He is going to come through for you.

Now, as the quality of patience is being developed, there is another quality that will be developed: and that quality is **“godliness.”** (**Read 2 Peter 1:5-6 again.**) As you have probably noticed by now, each of these spiritual qualities leads to the next quality. How, then, does patience lead to godliness? Well, let’s look at another Scripture, and see if we can find the link between patience and godliness.

Read Romans 5:1-4.

According to **verse 4**, patience works **“experience.”** In what way does patience lead to experience? Well, as God is developing the quality of *patience* in your life, He will put your patience to the test. And how does He do this? Through experience. As you are learning patience, God is putting you through difficult and trying experiences; and, as you gain experience, God is also developing **“godliness”** in you. How so? Well, as your patience is being formed through painful experiences, God is also developing godly character in you. For example, as you suffer affliction from enemies, the Lord is able to develop in you an attitude of love and forgiveness toward your enemies. Our sinful nature is bent toward bitterness and revenge. However, as you patiently endure the difficult experiences that God brings into your life, the Lord is able to develop in you the godly quality of forgiveness.

The development of godliness leads to the development of the next spiritual quality, which is **“brotherly kindness.”** (**Read 2 Peter 1:7 again.**) Brotherly kindness refers to love for your brothers and sisters in Christ. As you learn to love and forgive, you are able to bear with your brethren in Christ, even though they are imperfect. And brotherly kindness, as it is developed, leads to the highest of all spiritual qualities. That quality is **“charity.”**

Now, charity doesn't mean giving clothing or goods to the needy, as we have come to think of it today. The word "charity" is translated from the Greek word *agape*; and *agape* refers to the *highest* kind of love. It is a tender, sacrificial, completely unselfish love. It is the kind of love that flows from God alone. It is the kind of love that we read about in **1 Corinthians 13**.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, 13.

True, biblical "charity" is *not* merely the outward motion of giving to the poor. (Paul says that you could bestow *all* your goods to feed the poor, yet have not charity!) Also, charity is distinct from faith. You can have a *measure* of faith, yet not have much charity. "Charity" is an inward quality of completely unselfish, sacrificial love, which can come only from God.

There are many steps that must be taken as you move from that first spark of faith on the day of salvation to the highest of all godly qualities, which is charity. God wants you to abound in *all* these spiritual graces, Christian. He wants you to be *fruitful*. However, many Christians are *not* very fruitful. And why not? Because there is something very important that they have forgotten. This leads me to our last point.

II. The reason for stunted spiritual growth: forgetfulness of why you were saved (v. 9)

(Read verse 9 again.) According to **verse 9**, Christians who are lacking in these spiritual qualities are in a bad way. They are "*blind*," and "*cannot see afar off*." In other words, they can't see things in light of eternity (at least, not very well). Show me a Christian who is **not** adding these qualities to his life, and I'll show you a Christian who rarely weeps over, feels burdened for, or even thinks about the peril of lost people around him. Show me a Christian who is **not** growing in these areas, and I'll show you a Christian who rarely thinks about how "it will be worth it all when we see Jesus." A Christian who is not growing in these spiritual graces is thinking only about earthly problems, and not about the eternal glory that is coming. Consequently, he complains and murmurs, and thinks only about the hardness of this life. On the other hand, believers who are fruitful are able to "*see afar off*"—just as Abraham did.

Read Hebrews 11:8-16.

Do you see things "*afar off*," Christian? Do you live by faith, and cling to God's promises, and patiently endure through life's trials? Or do you cling only to the things that you can see? Do you become impatient and angry when things aren't going the way that you think they should go? Do you see the spiritual needs of others around you? Or are you constantly thinking of *your* needs? If so, then Peter says that you have "*forgotten that you were purged from your old sins*." Now, before you say, "Pastor, I haven't forgotten that I've been purged from my sins!", ask yourself this question: "Am I really growing in these qualities?" If you *aren't* growing in these qualities, then you *have* forgotten. You have forgotten why you are here. Christ purged you from your sins so that you might develop these spiritual graces in your life, through His divine power. *That* is why He saved you. *That* is why you are here.

Conclusion: Christian, if you really remember that Christ died to purge you from your sins, then you will also remember *why* He purged you from your sins. Christ forgave you and saved you so that you might live a life that is spiritually fruitful. Should this not be the kind of life you are living, please get right with

God today. **Perhaps you have never truly been saved.** If so, you cannot even begin to exercise these virtues! You must be purged of your sin, and saved! However, for this to happen, you must place your faith in Christ alone, and in His sacrifice. ***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”!***