

Is Your Faith Growing?

2 Peter 1:5-11

Pastor John Miller

Beginning in verse 1, “Simon Peter, a servant,” Peter obviously the writer of this epistle, and he is a servant. The word is *doûlos*, a bondsman, and he’s “an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith.” Now, notice that’s the introduction to our subject, and that is faith. The first four verses dealt with having a real faith, and then verses 5-11, do you have a growing faith. Here, Peter calls it a “like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” The epistle has a lot to say about knowing God as God reveals Himself to us in His Word. The key word “knowledge” there is important, so we have a “. . . knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having”—as believers—“escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Now we come to the fifth verse, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity”—or love. “For if these things be in you, and abound,”—this is the growing faith, you add to your faith and these things be in you and abound—“they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful”—you’ll be a growing, fruitful believer—“in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” He’s telling us what we need to do to not only have a growing faith, but in order that we will not fall. Verse 11, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest verses in the Bible is taken from the book of Habakkuk. It says there, “. . . the just shall live by his faith.” It’s repeated three times again in the New Testament, “The just shall live by faith.” Those who have been saved, those who have been forgiven, those who are believers, they’re just. How do they live? They live by faith. We as Christians are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, we live by faith, and by faith the Lord will take us home.

Let me just recap it for you real quick, the five aspects to our faith. We saw in verse 1 that we have a “like precious faith.” We saw in verses 1-2 that we have a faith that’s in the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So it’s a common, precious faith; it’s a faith in the Person of Jesus Christ; and then we saw thirdly, in verse 3, that it’s a faith that relies on the divine power, that He’s given us His power in “. . . all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” In verse 4, it’s a faith that rests on God’s promises. We have “. . . exceeding great and”—Peter’s favorite

word—"precious promises." Fifthly, we see in verse 4 that it's a faith that makes us " . . . partakers of the divine nature." So, precious faith, in the Person of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the promises of God, and partakers of the divine nature. So, we all have that need to grow in life and godliness, verse 3.

Peter wants us not only to have a real faith, as I said in verses 1-4, but he wants us to have a growing faith. Real faith should be a growing faith. If you really are born again, you're a true child of God, then he wants your faith to be growing and bearing fruit. Real faith leads to a growing faith. A growing faith demands diligence and effort on our part. Someone said that the Christian life is like power steering in a car. This is kind of a cool illustration. How many of you are old enough to remember cars that didn't have power steering? I still have a car without power steering. And then, all of the sudden, "Power steering? Wow! This is amazing!" Power steering doesn't mean that it steers itself, right? You still have to take the wheel and turn the wheel. You can't just sit there. It's not like driving a Tesla and tell where you need to go and it takes you where you want to go. Power steering means you still have to turn the wheel, but there's a power there. There's a *dynamis* power in the Christian life. The Christian life is that we put our effort into it, and then we rely upon and lean heavy upon the power of the Holy Spirit and God's Word being activated in our life.

Write down Philippians 2:12. This is how Paul spoke of it. He said, " . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The word "work out" means to live it out. Now, we're not working for our salvation. The Bible teaches we're saved by grace, but having been saved, we work it out. That "work out" concept is used of a mathematical equation to where you work out that mathematical equation.

When I was in school, one of my most dreaded subjects—well, actually all subjects in school were dreaded by me. I still have nightmares I'm in school. It was math. I'm horrible at math. I don't do math, so it's terrible. I'm just terrible at math. But I had a math teacher that loved math. He would start writing numbers on the board, and chalk's flying everywhere. His face would start to glow, and he would smile and just come alive. He's a sad, sick, little man, you know. He would start with these numbers and go. He got the number and would write it out. It's like, "Wow! That's amazing."

This thing of "work out" is like working it out, bringing it to its conclusion. What God puts in, we must work out; or better yet, we must live out our salvation. Peter tells us how to have a growing faith. This also brings the believer assurance.

There are three sections from verses 5-11. Let me just mention them. The first is verses 5-7 where we have a recipe for a growing faith, the ingredients needed to have a growing faith; then, verses 8-9, we're going to see the reasons that we need to have a growing faith; verses 10-11, we're going to see the results of us having a growing faith. If you're taking notes, the first thing we want to look at is the recipe for a growing faith. Let's go back there to verse 5. He says, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And

to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity,"—or love.

There's seven character qualities that we need to add to our faith. If our faith is going to be growing, getting fruitful and stronger, then these are the seven things we need to add to the faith. To introduce that, notice in verse 5, the phrase, "And beside this," means for this very reason. What reason does he mean? That's why I wanted to read verses 1-4. The fact that we have a " . . . like precious faith," in the Person of Christ, we have the promises of God and the power of God, so in light of this or, "And beside this,"—we need to give—"all diligence." Notice that phrase in verse 5, "giving all diligence." It means to bring every effort to task. It implies haste, earnestness, and determination. It's an exhortation that we earnestly, with haste and with determination, want to add these ingredients to our faith.

Now, it's not have faith, it's " . . . add to your faith." He's not talking about being saved, he's talking about being sanctified. I think it's kind of cool, verses 1-4 is salvation. Theologians would call it soteriology, how we're saved. Then, verses 5-7 is sanctification, how we grow. It's not just enough to be saved—I'm on my way to heaven, I have my fire insurance, I'm not going to hell—we want to grow in the Lord right now and bear fruit for His glory. So, the exhortation, " . . . add to your faith."

That word "add," this is a very important key word, was used of individuals who underwrote the expenses of the choruses in the Greek plays, so the word came to mean a generous and costly cooperation. You say, "Well, what're you talking about, Pastor John?" The Greeks were really into theater, music, and drama. If you've ever toured Greece, I've had the privilege of going a couple times to Greece and they have these outdoor amphitheaters in Athens. They still have them and meet outdoors. But in biblical times in the Greek world, when they had a play or a concert, someone had to pay for it. Wealthy individuals would underwrite the expense of the choir, of the chorus, or of the musicians, and they would pay for it. The word came to mean that you generously, cautiously cooperated with that. You gave your money to support or underwrite the chorus, so this is a picture of us generously, with cost to ourselves, cooperating with God. Again, Paul said, "I run the race that is set before me," and "I work together reaching for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

It's not self-effort, it's relying on the power of the Spirit of God and the Word of God in our lives. This is a supply to your faith concept. What do I need to add to my faith? What do I need to do to be a growing Christian? This is an interesting thought, and I believe it's true, but it's quite an indictment, you as a Christian can grow as much as you want to. You as a Christian can grow in Christ as a strong believer as much as you choose to. Amen? You choose to grow in the Lord. You choose to bring alongside to " . . . add to your faith." But what do we add or supply to our faith?

Peter gives us the recipe—7 ingredients we need to add that are character qualities to our faith. Let's look at them one at a time. The first one is virtue. Look at verse 5, " . . . add to your faith virtue." So, now that you're saved, now that you're a believer, now that you're a follower of Christ, you need to " . . . add to your faith virtue." What is virtue? Virtue is moral excellence. A

great translation is moral excellence. I'm going to try my best to define these words for you. It's a word that conveys the idea of committed to living purity and chastity and holiness before the Lord. It's called the courage to do what is right, the courage and the commitment to live a holy life in a hostile and unholy world. Simply stated—listen carefully—you, like Daniel in the book of Daniel, purpose in your heart that you will not be defiled with the king's meat.

The time to resist temptation is before temptation comes. Decide right now that you will not yield yourself to the flesh. Purpose in your heart that you will not be defiled with the king's meat. That's what Daniel and the three Hebrews did when they were in Babylon. Don't be afraid to live a pure life in a polluted world. Commit yourself to purity. Whether you're single or married, you should be committing yourself to moral purity. You should be committing yourself to holiness before the Lord. It's not okay to just live however you want according to the dictates of the flesh. That was your preconverted days. You're to commit yourself to living a life of godliness and purity.

The second thing we're to add is knowledge, “ . . . add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge,” verse 5. That word “knowledge” is an interesting word. It's the word *epign* ×6—0. The word *gn* ×6—0 means knowledge; the word *epign* ×6—0, the prefix before it, means an overflowing, personal, powerful experience. It doesn't mean intellectual knowledge, it means a personal experience. It's a particular knowledge that is learned by observation and experience. How do we get this knowledge? First, by having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Did you ever think how amazing it is that as a Christian that you know God? That freaks people out, especially non-Christians, “I know God.” “You know God?” “Yeah, I know God.” We used to sing, He walks with me / and He talks with me. We have a personal, intimate relationship with God, so we're to seek that and desire that, thirst for that, “Lord, I just want to walk with You. I want to talk with You, and have You talk to me through Your Word.” It's a personal *epign* ×6—9v à overflowing, personal, powerful experience. This is why Paul said, thirty years after his conversion in Philippians, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” So, you're going to grow as much as you bring “ . . . to your faith virtue; and to virtue,”—an *epign* ×6—9y6¶æðwledge.”

We also gain this knowledge by respecting and fearing God, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”—or knowledge, and by understanding God's Word—God found in His Word as He reveals Himself. The more you know about God as He reveals Himself in the Bible, the stronger you will be as a believer. So, the wisdom and discernment we need for life is found in God's Word. We can't grow without the Word of God. As I said, you grow as much as you want as a Christian. Open your Bible and read. If you're disappointed with your Christian life, open your Bible and read and pray and say, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” Realize this is God's living Word, and God speaks to your own heart, and the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and transforms the child of God into the image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Here's the third thing we need to add to our faith, and it's the word “temperance.” Verse 6, “And to knowledge temperance.” So, “ . . . add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to

knowledge temperance.” “Temperance” is self-control. It’s speaking of the ability to say, “No,” to sin, the restraint. It’s to be demonstrated in every aspect of the believer’s life. As Christians, we should not let anything have control over our minds, our emotions, our bodies, or our will. We should not let anything control our bodies, minds, will, except for the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Write down Ephesians 5:18, one of the great commands for the believer in the Bible. Do you know what it says? It says, “. . . be filled with the Spirit.” That, “be filled” is a command. It’s an imperative. That word is also what’s called in the passive voice, let the Spirit fill you. It’s also all-inclusive—everyone. It’s also in the present tense—let it constantly, continually, ongoingly fill you. That’s what gives us the ability to have self-control. It says in Galatians, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Charles R. Swindoll said about this self-control or temperance, “It means saying no to the second helping or no to the second glance.” It’s like me seeing a sign that says, “Donuts.” When I see a sign that says, “Donuts,” I say, “I rebuke you, devil. I bind you in the name of Jeeesuuus. Get behind me, Satan.” Just seeing a sign that says, “Donuts,” it’s just, “Uhhhh.” What a temptation. We need to bring into our faith this self-control, which is actually Spirit-controlled, that I “Walk in the Spirit, and . . . not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Here’s the fourth—get ready, write it down—“patience”. Just hearing that word makes me impatient. Notice, “. . . and to temperance patience.” We sometimes misunderstand this English word “patience”. We think of it as being passive. We just kind of smile when everything’s going crazy, and nothing bothers us. But it’s not a passive concept. “Temperance” has to do with pleasures of life, self-control over pleasures, while “patience” relates to the pressures and the problems of life. It means perseverance. I like to really redefine that word or translate that word “patience” to perseverance. It’s perseverance. It’s the ability to keep going. It’s steadfast endurance. It literally means the ability to keep going. It was used when someone was out for a walk and the wind was blowing against you, you got a strong headwind. If you’ve ever been out walking in a real strong wind that is so strong you have to lean to stand on your feet, you’re just kind of, “Whoa!” and you have to lean in. That’s what this word “patience” means. It’s not passive, it’s positive. It means steadfast endurance. It means you keep on putting one foot in front of the other. How do we move on? Keep plotting, keep putting one foot in front of the other, and the Lord gives us “patience”.

Do you know how we develop patience or perseverance? Through suffering and trials. If you pray for patience, trials will come. You say, “Well, I’m not going to pray for patience.” Patience is how God teaches us perseverance or the ability to endure or persevere. It’s an important part of the Christian life.

Here’s the fifth, verse 6, “godliness”. So, now we have, “. . . add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge—self-control—“and to”—self-control—“patience”—or steadfast endurance—“and to”—steadfast endurance—“godliness.” This is what’s called true devotion to God, true piety. I like to think of godliness simply as godlikeness. When somebody

is godly, they're like God or most like God. The godly person is a person that is like God, so bring a desire to be sanctified, to grow in holiness, and godliness.

One of the most godly characters in all the Bible is an Old Testament character, is that of Joseph. The interesting thing about Joseph is whether he was in the pit or the prison or the palace, Joseph always kept his focus on God. Years ago when I was preaching through the life of Joseph, I discovered that almost every time Joseph speaks, and it's recorded on the pages of Scripture, he makes mention of God. Every time Joseph opens his mouth, God comes out—he mentions God, he speaks about God. He focused on God; he lived for God. It's bringing God's consciousness into every facet, every aspect of our lives. Remember when his brothers were there in Egypt to get grain and he said, "You meant it for evil, but" —there it is— "God meant it for good." When Mrs. Potiphar tried to tempt him into sexual sin with her, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Every time he opened his mouth, he spoke about God. His mind was set on God, and that's what we need to bring into our Christian life—God consciousness. Every area of your life, whatever it is you're doing—working, playing—keep God in mind, keep God before your thoughts, keep your focus on God.

Here's the sixth, "brotherly kindness". Notice verse 7, "And to godliness"—godlikeness, God consciousness—"brotherly kindness." This is the Greek word *philadelphía*, which means brotherly love. This "brotherly kindness" is *philadelphía*, loving your brethren and the sisters in the church. It's treating others as your brothers and sisters in Christ. Godliness doesn't exist in a vacuum. This is why you can't separate yourself from the body of Christ and be a growing, fruitful Christian. You need to be involved in the lives of other people because we need the "one anothers," Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another,"—there's the 'one another'—"with brotherly love,"—*philadelphía*. We as brothers, we as sisters, in the church need to love one another, if you're a part of the body of Christ. You can't grow as a Christian without other believers. You need to be a part of a church, part of a fellowship, part of other people's lives, and you need to show them brotherly love or *philadelphía*. If you love God, you should also love the family of God, and you should forgive one another, serve one another, wash one another's feet, edify one another, provoke each other to love and good works. You need to get involved. We call it fellowship. We need to get involved with others.

Here's the last, seventh quality that we need to add to our faith, and that is "love". We go from *philadelphía*, " . . . brotherly kindness" to *agape* or *agáp* 2à He says in verse 7, " . . . and to brotherly kindness charity,"—which is love, and it is the Greek word *agáp* 2à It's God's love in you, flowing through you, not just to other believers but to all people. It's found in John 3:16, "For God so,"— *agáp* 6ly7F+P world,"—the whole world, the world in rebellion to Him—"that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Write down Romans 13:8 where Paul says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love"—that's the word *agáp* 9y6öæP another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." If you love others, you won't commit adultery. If you love others, you won't kill. If you love others, you won't lie. If you love others, you will not covet. It takes care of the commandments of God—you love God

with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and you love your neighbor as yourself.

There's the list for you in verses 5-7, “. . . add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance”—self-control—“and to”—self-control—“patience”—steadfast endurance, add to steadfast endurance—“godliness”—or godlikeness—“And to godliness brotherly kindness,”—philadelphía—“and to brotherly kindness,”—add love.

What happens when we do these things? Before we look at the text, remember back in verse 3 that we have God's power, and in verse 4 we have God's promises. So, remember to add these things to your faith. You rely on the promises and the power of God.

Let's move to verses 8-9 to the reasons for a growing faith. Why should we have a growing faith? Notice it starts with the word “For,” so we're going to get the reason or the rationale as to why verses 5-7. “For if these things,”—what things? The seven things we just read about—“If these things be in you, and abound.” If you take these seven ingredients and they're in your faith and in your heart and life and they're abounding, he says, “they make you that ye shall neither be barren”—I love this—“nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things”—the seven qualities to add to your faith—“is blind”—this is an amazing thought. He's speaking to believers. He refers to them in verse 10 as brethren, so he's calling them blind.

I'm getting ahead of myself, but the word “blind” there means to blink or to shut the eyes. It's probably intentionally the believer shuts his eyes and doesn't want to grow in his faith. It's a blind believer, verse 9, “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off,”—you're short-sighted—“and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins,”—and your old life. These are three incentives to grow. You could hear the first list about having a growing faith. You say, “Well, I'm not into growing faith. I'm just into cruise faith, kick-back faith. I don't want to work at it. I don't want to be a growing Christian.”

Here's three reasons, three incentives. Write them down. First, you won't be barren or unfruitful. It's putting it in the negative, “. . . ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful,” which is a backwards way of saying, “You will be fruitful. You will bear fruit.” If you want to be a fruitful Christian and not a barren Christian...It's possible to be a Christian with very little fruit in your life. People really have to look close to see if there's any fruit in your life. You're not overflowing with fruitfulness. Write down Psalm 1, “Blessed is the man”—or the woman—“that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,”—in other words they live a holy life, a godly life. They practice endurance, and they practice holiness. “But his delight is in the law of the LORD,”—they don't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, they don't stand in the way of sinners, they don't sit in the seat of the scornful. But their delight is where? “. . . in the law of the LORD”—which is God's Word—“and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” Then, what happens? “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers . . . his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” It's making a commitment not to sin but to saturate my heart and mind in the Word of God.

James, in his short little practical epistle in the New Testament, tells us, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead." So, I want a growing faith. I want a working faith, a fruitful faith. We will be useful and fruitful. Write down John 15. Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And, "If you abide in Me, you will bring forth much fruit."

Here's the second reason in this section as to why we should add to our faith, that is, so we won't be blind and short-sighted. This is so amazing. We want to avoid fruitlessness, and we want to avoid blindness. Notice it says in verse 9, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off." They are short-sighted, blind and short-sighted, so blind believers and short-sighted saints. They probably were listening to maybe the false teachers who would say, and we're going to get it in this epistle, "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." They didn't have a focus on heaven. They were blind to their own sins. We're going to see in the next point that they had forgotten that they were purged from their old sinful past. So, we don't want to be blind or short-sighted; and again, in the Greek, the grammar of that phrase "blind" indicates that they shut their own eyes. It was used for blinking the eye or the shutting of one's eye, so a blind believer who doesn't want to see spiritual things. It's kind of a fascinating thought.

And they're short-sighted, they don't see far off. I believe he's referring to the fact that they don't have an eternal perspective. One of the most important things for you to have as a Christian is keep eternity always before your eyes. Remember I said, "Keep your eyes on God? Bring God into everything about your life, and always keep eternity in perspective." How does this effect eternity? What does it have to do with eternity? Live with eternity on your mind. Don't get short-sighted, live for the temporal or the mundane or only the now, but live for eternity. It's so very important.

Thirdly, he says that you don't want to forget that you have been forgiven, so add to your faith. So, you don't want to be barren or unfruitful, you don't want to be blind or short-sighted, and you don't want to forget that you have been forgiven. Look at verse 9, " . . . and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." We used to sing in a beautiful hymn:

Jesus keep me near the cross,

There is a precious fountain,

Free to all—a healing stream,

Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.

In the cross, in the cross,

Be my glory.

It's so important that we keep the cross before us. So, we want God to be our focus, we want eternity to be our focus, and we want the cross of Christ to be our focus. This is why Communion is so important, that we focus on the cross. We remember our sins have been forgiven. We remember what Jesus did on the cross. So, we meditate on the cross, we are motivated by the cross. We don't just come to the cross to be forgiven, we stay at the cross to be forgiving toward others, and we live in the power of the cross. Paul said in Galatians, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Do a study of the cross, meditate on the cross, sing about the cross, thank God for the cross, and live in the shadow of the cross and in light of the cross. Don't forget that you have been forgiven. You never forget the cross. It grips your mind and your heart, a saved soul; you don't want to have a wasted life. This also brings assurance to the believer.

Here's my third and last section, verses 10-11, we have the results of growth. So, if I add to my faith these seven ingredients, verses 5-7, this is what results, verse 10, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure,"—he repeats what he said in verse 5, " . . . giving all diligence," and now he says, "Wherefore,"—this is the wrap-up—"give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." How can I prevent backsliding? How can I prevent falling as a Christian, crashing and burning? Do these things and it's promised you in God's Word, " . . . ye shall never fall."

Peter knew what it was to crash and to fall, "I don't know Him. I don't know Him." Three times he denied the Lord, and he had to go out and weep bitterly. Peter is trying to tell us what we need to do that we will not fall.

In verse 11, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I'm not going to tarry on this, but please listen carefully. There are three benefits of having a growing faith, three benefits of a growing faith. First, assurance. Look at verse 10, " . . . make your calling and election sure." If you're saved and you know it, your life will surely show it; and if your life surely shows it, then you're saved and you know it. Amen? What better way to be assured then to have a growing, blossoming faith in the Lord.

Secondly, you will have stability—I love this—" . . . for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall,"—so, you're not going to stumble, you're not going to fall. Thirdly, this is one that blesses me, you'll have a triumphant entrance into heaven. I have written down in my notes, "triumphant jubilation". It's not, "If you go to heaven," it's how you go to heaven. You know, a lot of Christians are on their way to heaven, but they don't have heaven now in their soul. I know you've heard me say it many times, but D.L. Moody used to say, "A little faith will take your soul to heaven, but a lot of faith, a growing faith, a strong faith, will bring heaven to your soul." You don't have to wait to get to heaven to have joy, heaven can come into your soul right now. You can have heaven on earth. I know it's not going to be the same as when we get to heaven, but we can have heaven in our soul. And, when we do get to heaven, this verse, verse 11, is actually saying that we can have an abundant entrance " . . . into the everlasting kingdom."

This is a phrase that was used for, in the Greek Olympics, the athletic heroes who would come back from the contest with the laurel wreath on their head, and when they would enter the city, there would be a special gate built and designed for them to come into the city through, and all the city would be celebrating, cheering, and welcoming them. It's kind of like your favorite sports team wins the NBA finals or wins a Super Bowl and they have a ticker-tape parade and everyone's cheering and celebrating. So, the Greek athletes would come to the city and everyone would rejoice, clap, and celebrate them.

That means, when you get to heaven, it's going to be a triumphant entrance. You might be saying, "Well, isn't that true of every believer?" The answer, no. Yeah, you're going to heaven, that's worth celebrating, but there are some people that are going to get there triumphantly. There are some Christians that are going to just claw their way into heaven and get there by the skin of their teeth. When the Bible speaks about the Judgment Seat of Christ, it talks about the works of wood, hay, and stubble which will be burnt up, and we'll be saved but just by fire. But then there'll be a triumphant entrance where some will have gold, silver, precious stones, and there will be great joy and great triumphant celebrating as we enter into the gates and we enter into paradise, we enter into heaven. What a blessing that is!

I believe that the Scriptures do indicate that we will go to heaven, if we've been born again. If you're a Christian, you're going to heaven. That's not the question. The question is how we go to heaven—triumphantly, victoriously, celebrating or did you stumble and fall, stumble and fall, stumble and fall, backslide, or will you enter in triumphantly. So, invest in your faith. It will bring you eternal rewards, and you won't be ashamed when you see Christ face to face. You'll go to heaven, but how will you go to heaven?

Don't forget, if you're a Christian, you have God's power, verse 3, to live a godly life; you have God's promises, verse 4, ". . . great and precious,"—and you become—"partakers of the divine nature." Now, what we need to do is, ". . . add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge . . . temperance"—self-control—" . . . patience . . . godliness . . . brotherly kindness," and love. Amen?