

2nd Peter 1:5-11

5 For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. 8 For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. 10 Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. 11 For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you (NRSV).

During the recent presidential election I saw the best sign ever - Jesus 2020. That is the best sign ever because that is putting Jesus first. The person that placed the sign in their yard was representing Jesus to the world. This is exactly what we are to do, as Christians, in contemporary society. We are to represent Jesus and everything that he stood for.

Second Peter is a letter that was written at a time when the Roman culture was dominant and Christianity was despised as a foreign religion. This is because the Roman society was hierarchical and there was fear that Christianity would damage the established hierarchy. The author of 2nd Peter counters these fears by teaching faith forming doctrine. You are to imitate Christ. As such, your values will conflict with the values of society but you are to remain faithful. Your example is Christ. Jesus did not sacrifice principle for appeasement and neither should you. Therefore, you are to live out your faith even when it is difficult. God has given to us all the knowledge that we need to make the ultimate decision of life - to accept Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. So, instead of living by the ways of rest of the world, the path is open for living a righteous life.

The theme of today's Scripture is Christian conduct with a list of virtues that develop from faith to love. The Scripture starts with the words "For this very reason." This means we need the background. Verses three and four tell us that we have received faith through the righteousness of God and Jesus Christ our Savior. His divine power has given us everything. He has given us very great promises so that through them we may escape from the corruption that is in the world. We are set apart and become participants of the divine nature. What we learn from these verses is that righteousness is not from our own effort but granted to us from God through saving work of Jesus Christ. We do not earn salvation; it is a free gift.

For this reason what we are to do is to make every effort to support our faith with the faith forming list of goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. We do not earn salvation by doing these things, by following a set of rules and being obedient to a list, we do these things because we have faith. As such we increase, that is we mature spiritually, and this spiritual development increases our ability to avoid sin and stay on the path to righteousness to the eternal glory that is reserved for us.

I was reading the Secret Place Devotional on Wednesday Nov. 4. It was written by someone that had a well behaved puppy that had been through some behavior training classes. The author of the devotional kept another dog for a friend for two weeks and the puppy learned to beg for food at the table, dig holes in yard, and howl at night in order to be allowed to sleep in bed. The puppy learned this bad behavior from the other dog. The lesson of the devotional is that

we are influenced by negativism in society - the negative actions of others. We cannot stay away from people with bad behavior but we can remain true to our Christian education and training.

It is all about relationship. The blessings we received through the righteousness of Jesus Christ is not a privilege for the few, it is for all who believe. It is given to all equally without elitism or partiality. God through Christ distributes to us the gift of faith. The grace and peace that we receive is rooted in relationship. It is not rooted in a set of rules to obey, or rooted in being a righteous moral person, or obeying a strict moral code. We are rooted in relationship and we live a righteous life according to this relationship.

Through the power of Christ, and the Holy Spirit within us, Christians have all we need to live a Godly life, to live obedient to the will of God, and to live according to God's moral standards. Again, we are not saved because we live a godly life; we live a godly life because of our relationship with Christ. The promises of Christ come to us due to the relationship. Christians live in a world of sin but have the power to avoid that sin because Christ enables his followers to live godly lives. When you live a godly life, you build faith formation which is founded on a loving relationship with God and Jesus.