

Text: 2 Pt 1.12-15

Our text in 2 Peter takes an interesting turn at this point.

From verse 1-11, Peter spoke of his desire the multiplication of grace and peace in their lives by way of the graces God provided. He encourages us to develop those graces, then extols the benefits of those graces.

Another word for graces is “virtues.” We can compare them to the “fruit of the Spirit” in Paul and the “wisdom from above” in James.

These qualities are basic to Christianity. We could call them “Christianity 101.”

All the writers of Scripture encourage the development of spiritual life along these lines.

In our text tonight, Peter speaks directly to us about his reason for doing this.

- First, he describes what he is doing (and his eagerness to do it)
- Next, he describes why he is doing it (really, his ministry philosophy)
- And finally, he declares his resolve not only to fulfill this ministry, but to perpetuate it

I’ve called our message tonight, “**The Preacher and the Virtues.**”

The reason for the title is that this little section can really offer a solid description or foundation of what modern Christian ministry is about.

Read 2 Pt 1.12-15

Proposition: Christian ministry involves constantly calling to mind the basic virtues of the Christian life so that Christians will continue the ministry in the days to come.

I. Activity [the present ministry] (12)

A. The pastor’s preoccupation: reminding of these things

1. The statement rests on the preceding passage, vv. 1-11 (“therefore”)
 - a. We’ve argued that these virtues are all part of the Christian life
 - b. They are developed to a greater or lesser degree in each one
 - c. The believer should give “all diligence” to growing in these matters

2. The pastor (here, Peter himself) makes this his mission
 - a. One curiosity, future tense “I will always be ready to remind you”
 - b. Various explanations, most likely as follows
 - 1) He is thinking of what he just wrote
 - 2) He looks ahead to what he will write
 - 3) He thinks about how he will always conduct his ministry
 - 4) So, he makes no apology, he will always be ready to remind as he has just done
- B. The saint’s present level of understanding
 1. You already know these things
 2. You are already established in the truth
 - a. The fact that the saints already know these things doesn’t dissuade Peter
 - b. The false teachers he will expose in ch. 2 are in his mind: the need is ever present
 3. Here, note, he mentions “the truth”
 - a. Not “these things”
 - b. They are grounded in more than just “these things” – the virtues they must continually develop
 - c. They are grounded in the truth (Jude 3, “the faith”) that holds fast against false teaching

“We must not glide lightly over Peter’s concern about reminding the readers of already known and familiar truth. The history of the Church as a whole shows how careless the Church can be about clinging to divine revelation. So bad have things become in our own day, that the truth of justification by faith alone and of salvation as a free gift has already been submerged and

lost among many evangelicals. The Reformation almost needs to occur again!”¹

“When people are as they should be, it is worthwhile to stir them up. You do not want to stir up dirty water, but you may stir that which is pure and sweet as much as ever you like. And a good fire sometimes becomes a better one by a little stirring up.”²

II. Philosophy [the undergirding consideration] (13-14)

A. The correct ministry for every pastor: spiritual stimulation

1. This ministry is *right* (or *righteous*): a duty according to God’s standard

a. The Lord told him to feed the sheep (Jn 21)

b. The Lord told him to establish the brethren (Lk 22.32)

“Peter had no intention of retiring from his apostolic assignment.”³

2. This ministry involves stimulating saints (both experienced and new) (“stir up”)

“Peter hoped that his words would stab the believers awake so they would reject what the opponents taught. Believers know the gospel, and yet they must, in a sense, relearn it every day.”⁴

¹ Zane C. Hodges, “Exposition of Second Peter.” The KERUGMA Message, 3.1.3 in Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Pt 1.12.

² Charles H Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 2 Peter*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 2 Pt 1.13.

³ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, S.C: Bob Jones University Press, 1989), 66.

⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 309.

B. The temporal reality of every ministry: the brevity of opportunity

1. The present ministry: “as long as I am in this earthly dwelling”

2. The future reality: “the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent”

a. Laying aside = putting off one’s clothes

1) This could be death or Rapture

2) Both events are imminent (overhanging)

b. The Lord himself made this clear to Peter

1) We immediately think of what John records in Jn 21.18-19

Jn 21.18-19 “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.”¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”

2) John had not written these words at the time Peter wrote 2 Peter

3) Likely, due to age, he knew his time was soon (if in Rome, he may have even known more)

3. The reality for us all: our time of ministry is short, the Lord is at hand

It is urgent for us to occupy ourselves with the *right* things. We have our indulgences, our diversions, and we have much work to do just to keep our lives going.

But faithful ministry is everything for pastors, as well as for *mature Christians*. The call is to be a servant, forgetting self, investing in others.

III. Resolution [the future provision] (15)

A. The consequent resolve: diligence

1. “to do something with intense effort and motivation”⁵
2. Again future tense, but here I think he has this letter (at least) in mind (possibly also the Gospel of Mark)

B. The ultimate goal: ongoing usefulness

1. The reminders, especially the written reminder, is a record that future believers may draw on

We are using Peter’s words right now!

2. The efforts Christians make should be to build for the future
 - a. Many books
 - b. Churches that last
 - c. Christians that serve
 - d. Ministries that continue in usefulness

Not all churches survive, some come for a time, and then disappear. Yet the work can still persist in lives, and God allows some to have lengthy ministries.

Metropolitan Tabernacle in London is a notable example of this — goes back hundreds of years.

Conclusion:

“When we are gone from the earth, we want the truth that we have spoken to live on after us, we want even from our graves to continue to speak for Christ. Therefore it was that Peter kept on repeating the same truth over and over again. He hit this nail on the head many times, and sought to clinch it, so that, when he was gone, it would not start from its place, but would remain firmly fixed.”⁶

⁵ Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 661.

⁶ Spurgeon, *2 Peter*, 2 Pt 1.15.