

2 Peter 1

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[0 : 00] How much does godliness matter to you? Most Christians would say of course godliness matters, but does it really matter?

! Is a godly life something desirable or is it something essential? Is it something so necessary that we make every effort we do whatever it takes to grow in godliness?

Is it constantly on our minds to be, as Peter says, diligent to be found by Jesus without spots or blemishes? How much does godliness matter to you? This question is facing us every day. For a long time there's been a trend in churches towards a lack of urgency for godly living.

And the modern gospel is often a watered down version of reasons like this. Jesus has paid for all our sins. So yes we should aim for godly lives, but basically it doesn't matter because we're covered with Christ's righteousness.

Godly lies are not strictly necessary, they're optional. Yes they're important, but at the end of the day it's not essential. Do you see how subtly deceitful that is? It takes things that are true, but it follows them through to false conclusions.

[1 : 21] It's true that godly lies are not what saves you. If you think that you can get right with God by living a godly life, you need to know that's impossible.

Only Christ's righteousness can make us right with God. That is absolutely Peter's gospel. But his gospel also says the fruit of salvation. Godly living must be present in the life of the Christian. It must be present.

As a younger Christian I didn't know how those two truths held together. If salvation is all of grace, why do I need to do the hard work of growing in godliness?

And so I was confused when I read verses like these ones. 2 Peter 1, verse 10. I'm slightly paraphrasing these. It says, If you practice these godly qualities, you will never fall away.

For in this way there will be provided for you an entrance into the kingdom. Or chapter 3, verse 10. The day of the Lord is coming when the works that are done on the earth will be exposed.

[2 : 27] So what sort of people ought you to be? Living lives of godliness and holiness. Chapter 2, verse 20. If you have escaped from the corruption of the world, and then you go back to your old sinful ways, it would have been better for you to never have heard the gospel.

Chapter 2, verse 9. God knows how to rescue the godly and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment. Godliness is not just nice to have. It's essential.

You know, this topic was important for the first readers too. They had a similar danger to us. False teachers were saying to them, it doesn't matter how you live because Jesus is not coming back.

There will be no day of judgment, no day of accountability. So the apostle Peter writes this letter, his second letter. And we're going to be digging into it over the next few weeks.

If you don't know this letter well, it's worth meditating on because these are Peter's last words.

When Peter wrote this letter, he knew he was going to die soon. Have a look at chapter 1, verse 13.

[3 : 38] Peter says, I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to him.

Jesus told Peter that he didn't have long left. The foundational apostle, the rock on whom the church is built, is about to die. And so this letter begins a big transition from the age of the apostles to the post-apostolic era.

And Peter knows that, so what is he going to say in his farewell speech? What was crucial for the Christians to never forget after the apostles were gone?

Well, here's a summary of Peter's apostolic message. Jesus is coming back and godliness matters. And he starts in chapter 1 with the second of those things.

Godliness matters. This morning we're looking at verses 1 to 4, so please keep your Bibles open there. And we're asking the question, why does godliness matter?

[4 : 47] And what we're going to see is that godliness is the goal. Godliness is the goal of the gospel. So let's dig in. First of all, godliness is the goal of the apostles' message.

That's our first point. Godliness is the goal of the apostles' message. Before we see how godliness is the goal, Peter wants us to know that this is God's word through the apostles.

It's the authentic message from Jesus' appointed messengers. And it's easy to miss this the first time you read through, but there's a big emphasis on the apostles here. Look at verse 1.

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. That's a pretty normal way to start a letter, but it's worth reflecting on the fact that Peter is the foundational apostle on whom the church is built. Did you notice there that Peter uses both of his names? Simeon and Peter. And that draws our attention to the fact that Jesus renamed him.

[5 : 53] He was called Simeon or Simon. And Jesus said, I'm going to call you Peter, which means rock. Because on this rock I will build my church. In other words, Jesus builds his church on the foundation of the apostles.

And particularly on Peter as the foundational apostle. And so in verse 1 when he says, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours. He's saying to the readers, your faith is equal to mine and to the other apostles who saw Christ with our own eyes.

Why does he say that? Well if the foundational apostle is about to die and it may not be long until all the apostles are gone, this is a transitional stage.

He's passing on the apostolic faith like a relay runner who passes on the baton to the next run.

Peter is passing on the faith to the next generation who haven't seen Jesus.

And he's saying this gospel that we're passing on to you is fully yours. As much as it is ours. Isn't that amazing? None of us have ever seen Jesus physically.

[7 : 02] We don't know what he looked like. We don't know what he sounded like. But we know him. Because the apostles have passed on their faith to us. We have a faith of equal status with the eyewitness closest friends of the Lord Jesus.

Not because we're great. But because of verse 1, the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. You know, you feel like they had a real living relationship with Jesus but we've just got a book about him.

It's not the same. But we'll see later on that what we've received through the apostles is much more than some facts about Jesus. So this is the authentic apostles' message.

Now why would Peter bring up that transition? Well it's important for understanding verses 3 to 4.

Look down with me to verse 3. Did you hear the change in pronoun?

Us, us, us, us, you.

[8 : 24] Peter is saying, God has granted to us, the apostles, these things and through us he's granted them to you.

And this is repeated throughout the letter. Verse 16, for we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. In other words, you weren't eyewitnesses, but we, the apostles, made known to you what we saw.

Or verse 19, we have the prophetic word again more fully confirmed to which you will do well to pay attention. Again, chapter 3, verse 2, you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles.

The gospel and all its benefits come to us from Christ through the apostles. This is the authentic message from God's appointed messengers.

[9 : 32] Why is Peter laboring this? Well, the point is that we can have complete confidence that what we're about to hear in this letter are Jesus' words. Because Jesus chose Peter and said, I'm building my church on you.

I'm entrusting this precious gospel to you. So when Peter says, Jesus is coming back, when he says, Godliness really matters, we can trust him.

We can trust that this isn't something fishy that he just made up. This is the gospel. And if anyone tells you that godliness doesn't really matter, they're the ones who are not authentic.

So that's our first point. Godliness is the goal of the apostles' message. But we need to see more about what is this message. What is Peter's gospel?

Verses 3 to 4 basically summarise the apostolic gospel. And here's what Peter wants us to know. The whole point of our salvation is godly lives. And God has given everything we need for godliness.

[10:38] That's our second point. Godliness is the certain goal of the gospel. Godliness is the certain goal of the gospel. Look down with me again to verse 3.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. His divine power. Who is it referring to here?

Well, the last person that is mentioned is Jesus. Verse 2. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power. It's the same power that's mentioned in verse 16. Peter says, we made known to you the power and coming of who?

Our Lord Jesus Christ. It's Christ's divine power. But what is Christ's divine power for? What is his purpose that he carries out by his power?

[11:37] It says there, Christ's divine power has granted to us through the apostles all things that pertain to life and godliness. All things for a godly life.

That's the goal. That's the goal. These two words, life and godliness, it's very likely that Peter's using those words together to form one concept. A godly life.

And that's what is granted to us. And this word granted in verse 3, it has a royal flavour to it. It's King Jesus bestowing on us from his royal bounty all things that are needed for a godly life.

That's his plan for us. That's what he wants for us. And that's what he's given us. Isn't that encouraging? Sometimes it feels like we don't have what we need for godly living.

It's like we know that God expects godliness but we can't do it. It's a bit like building Ikea furniture. Have you ever bought something from Ikea and you're about to assemble it and you've got the manual and you've laid out the pieces and then you realise that there's an important part missing.

[12:49] It's the most annoying thing isn't it? Because you need all the parts in order to assemble that piece of furniture. But it's the opposite with our godliness. God has given us everything that we need.

When God has a plan, he secures everything necessary for the outcome. Christ has given you all things. There is nothing lacking for your growth in godliness.

If you're in Christ, you have everything that is required because it's his divine power which has granted it freely to us. I don't know about you but I'm naturally cynical and a bit pessimistic.

I often look at my life and think, I'm just disastrously sinful. Am I even growing in godliness? It just seems too difficult. I need to be reminded regularly of Christ's divine power and how he's granted to us, not just a bit of help, but all things for a godly life.

If you're in Christ, your godliness is inevitable. So what we're seeing is the goal of the gospel is godly lives. And Christ has secured that by his divine power.

[14:00] And we need to not mishear this. Peter's not saying that you need to be godly so that God will save you. He's saying God has saved you to secure your godliness.

Godliness is not the condition for salvation, it's the result of salvation. And if that's the case, everyone who's in Christ will become godly because his divine power never fails.

So how does all of this happen? Take a look with me at verse 3. How do we receive this gift unto godliness? Well, the apostles received these things, verse 3, through the knowledge of him.

Knowledge. Knowledge comes up a lot in 2 Peter. And this evening we're going to see in verse 5 that we're supposed to keep adding more knowledge.

But the word for knowledge here is a different one. It's not a knowledge that you keep growing in. This is the decisive knowledge that's given the moment a person sees that Jesus is Lord.

[15:05] It happens at conversion. This is like that moment when Jesus asked Peter, Who do you say that I am? Do you remember that? And Peter said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus said, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. That's the kind of knowledge that Peter's talking about. The apostles saw Jesus and it was revealed to them that he is the Christ.

He is the Son of God. And that same knowledge was passed on to us when we heard the apostles' message and our eyes were opened to see that Jesus is Lord.

So you see what it's saying? The moment we are saved and recognise Jesus as Lord, we have everything we need for Godly lives. This is not something that's only accessible to a few special

Christians who've reached a level of spiritual maturity.

No, the very day that your new life in Christ begins, you are equipped for Godliness. It's through the knowledge of Him that this growth in Godliness begins.

[16:17] But Peter doesn't stop there. Verse 4 he goes on, God entrusted his promises to the apostles to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

And that's what they did. Peter got up on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed, The promise is for you and for your children and all who are far off. That's in preaching the gospel, proclaiming the promise of the Holy Spirit and of forgiveness of sins for all who call upon the name of the Lord. Jesus has granted these precious and very great promises to us through the apostles. You know, these gospel promises are promises which lead to union with God in Christ.

That's what Peter is going to talk about next. And so these promises certainly include Jesus' great promise to send His Holy Spirit. Can you think of anything more precious?

When God promises you, I will give you myself. I will give you my own Holy Spirit. These are breathtaking promises. That's why it's worth giving up everything in order to gain Christ.

[17:37] He's worth more than all the treasures in the world. And here's where things just get too massive to really grasp. These next words are outrageous really.

Here we come to the goal of everything that's been said. The goal of Christ's power. The goal of coming to know Christ. The goal of His precious promises. The goal of Christ's promises. Look at verse 4.

Peter says, So that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature. Isn't that one of the most shocking statements you can find anywhere?

God is sharing His nature with you. God is sharing. I don't think that's something we can really grasp. It's too awesome.

And we need to unpack that in a moment. But can you see that our godliness is the certain goal of the Gospel? Christ's power secures it.

[18:37] The Spirit gives us the knowledge of Him. Christ grants us His promises. And God shares His divine nature with us. Godliness is the certain goal of the Gospel.

So we've been seeing all the way through that godliness is the goal of the Apostles' message. And it's not just wishful thinking. It's the certainty for those in Christ. And our final point is this.

Godliness is the result of sharing God's nature. Peter just said that the goal of the promises is so that you may partake in the divine nature.

God shares His nature with us. But what on earth does that mean? Does that mean that we become gods? Do Christians transcend humanity in some way?

Well, Peter explains what he means. He says that you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that's in the world because of sinful desire.

[19:40] There's a connection between sharing God's nature and escaping the corruption of sin. This is a moral thing. He goes on to say, For this reason, because you now share in God's nature, make every effort to grow in Godliness.

Things like virtue and self-control and love, which we're going to see this evening. Sharing God's nature means becoming like Him in His moral excellence. In other words, it's the same thing we've been seeing this whole time.

The goal of the Gospel is godliness. To be like God in righteousness and holiness. Paul says the same thing in slightly different words.

He describes this sharing in the divine nature as a recreation after the image of God. Ephesians 4.24, he says, Put on the new self created after the likeness of God.

What does this likeness, this divine likeness look like? Well, he goes on to explain, In true righteousness and holiness. Sharing God's nature means righteousness and holiness.

[20:51] It's his moral excellence. I don't know about you, but when I read those words in 2 Peter 1.4, those words, having escaped from the corruption in the world, sometimes I think, really?

We've already escaped from the corruption of sin. It doesn't feel like that a lot of the time. But Peter says, past tense, you have escaped. Because at the moment that we were converted, Christ set us free from the tyranny of the devil.

He rescued us from the power of sin. We were transferred immediately from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. That means as soon as you become a Christian, you've escaped from sin being the dominating force in your life.

