

The word of God is the Will of God

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2 Peter

By Ray Gentry

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We have the blessing this morning of having Dr. Ray Gentry come and bring the word of God for us. Ray is a dear friend of ours and of the church and has been for a number of years and has been considered as our possible Executive Pastor. We'll be voting after the service in a ministry update meeting. That's the official title of what we call the business meeting, which sometimes is called various names. It's the ministry update meeting and we ask all members to stay after the service for that important meeting. If you're new to Providence and you're not a member but you'd like to stay, you're welcome to stay and join us but only members will be voting, of course, in the election part of that meeting. But Ray and his wife Debra and Allison have been worshipping with us for a number of weeks, and you got to meet Ray a couple of weeks ago. He shared some personal things about his life and his passion, and we're asking you to consider him as Executive Pastor, which is primarily an administrative role, but it also is a pastoral role. He has a pastor's heart and shepherding people is a part of who he is. He's not going to be normally preaching. It's not that I'm looking for somebody else to fill the pulpit for me more. That's not it. Dalton's already asking me all the time to preach. I have to beat him back, but Ray's heart is pastoral. He's a man of God and uses the word of God to shepherd the people of God and so we wanted you to hear him bring the word. He's going to come and share now from God's word with us. Ray, we're honored to have you this morning.

Good morning. Good to see you here today. It is a privilege and an honor to be with you. If you have your Bibles, turn to 2 Peter 1. We're going to be studying 2 Peter 1 today, 1 through 11. Has anyone ever had fun with Waldo, the book, "Where's Waldo?" Our kids enjoyed it and our grandkids enjoy it. If you've never done it, it's kind of fun, although it can be frustrating. In the midst of all that, where's Waldo? You know, I mean, every page has different things about, you know, there's a bunch of pictures there, right, and then the goal is to find Waldo or to be the first one if you've got two or three people to find Waldo. So, too often, I think in the Christian life, we think that finding the will of God is like finding Waldo. It's like, oh my goodness, that's hard, and either we give up or we look everywhere but the right place to find the will of God, and once you start getting into this, you kind of know what to look for and where to look on each page. But too many people believe that finding the will of God takes a whole lot of effort and that is not the case. The title of the message is, "The Word of God is the Will of God." The word of God is the will of God.

Have you ever asked yourself, what is God's will for my life? You know, we tend to ask it more subconsciously than consciously and today I want to help us with that. It does not matter what you and I think is God's will, it matters what God's word says is God's will. Too often we make it a lot harder than it is. The will of God is not like trying to find Waldo hiding in the midst of all these figures. It is not unknowable. The title is, again, "The Word of God is the Will of God." So if you've found 2 Peter 1, please follow along in your copy of God's word as I read out of mine. 2 Peter 1:1 through 11.

1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

May the Lord bless the reading of his word.

Let's go to him in prayer.

Lord Jesus, we love You, we adore You, we bow down before You. We thank You for Your holy word and we thank You that through Your word, we can know Your will, but when we disobey Your word, we're in the dark, we are not able to really follow Your will because You've already shown us Your will in Your word. So Father, I pray that Your Holy Spirit will convict us where we need conviction, encourage us where we need encouragement, comfort us where we need comfort as we study Your word together as a body of Christ. And all this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

God wants us to know him and to understand what his will is. The recipients of this letter are probably the same ones that received 1 Peter, and we know from just several weeks

ago, 1 Peter 1:1 says that book was written to those who reside as aliens scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia who were chosen. So that's the churches of Asia Minor, which is now modern-day Turkey. First point, in verses 1 and 2, what believers have received from the Lord. What believers have received from the Lord. First, we see the gift of faith, the gift of faith. Notice it's not anything that we earn or deserve. He says, "To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours." Received, received. He is saying salvation is not by personal effort, but purely by God's grace. We receive it by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Believers share the equal gift of salvation because God's righteousness is imputed to us. The Greek only has one article before the phrase, "our God and Savior Jesus Christ," making the entire phrase refer to the same person. Peter here is identifying Jesus as both Savior and God, making this one of the clearest New Testament declarations of the divinity of Christ. All believers share equal privileges before God. There are no first and second class citizens in the kingdom. This standing was accomplished by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The second thing we have received here that I see is an identity as a bond-servant. An identity as a bond-servant. You know, throughout the Scriptures, there are various terms used for Christians, right? Followers of Jesus. Obviously, the most common one is disciple, of course, which means learner, and we should continue to be learners. Obviously, that's one of the reasons we're here today. But here, Peter identifies himself in two ways. First as an apostle, one divinely called by God as an eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ to proclaim his good news, but he also identifies himself as a bond-servant of his Savior Jesus Christ. We identify as bond-servants because we have received a faith, as he says here, of the same kind as his. Of the same kind as his. What is a bond-servant? A bond-servant was one who willingly placed himself in the position of submission, with submission and duty and obedience to his master. Of course, the Greek word *doulos* here is rendered in various translations, slave, servant, bond-servant. It's a designation suitable for every believer.

Do you consider yourself, Christian, a bond-servant of Jesus or is obeying him optional? I think too many professing believers think it's optional but we're to be bond-servants and consider ourselves and act like bond-servants of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One example of many in Scripture is first turn with me to 1 Corinthians 7:22. 1 Corinthians 7:22, "For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men." You know, on Saturday mornings in men's Bible study that I was privileged to lead yesterday, we were talking about courage versus fear and the fear of man, and too often, we are slaves to what other people think, right? And, oh my goodness, you know, we have fear of man and we get caught up in the fact that, "Oh, I've got to please that boss or got to please this," or whoever. We're only to please Jesus. He's the number one, right? He's the Master. Who are you living for? Are you living to please others or are you living to please Jesus Christ? Does the word bond-servant describe your attitude toward Jesus? Are you claiming one thing but living another?

And notice in verse 2, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." This is not simply a greeting, it is also a blessing and an encouragement. Of course, grace means God's unmerited favor shown towards sinners who trust Christ for salvation. Peace is the sense of well-being and the resultant blessings that one enjoys because of being in right relationship with Christ. God multiplies, multiplies, multiplies grace and peace when believers consistently and persistently strive after the true knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Believers receive surpassing grace for every sin and abundant peace for every trial.

How do we obtain grace and peace from God? By increasing our knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord through Bible intake and obedience to the intake. You may have heard this or seen this years ago, and I have too, but it bears repeating, especially for those that haven't, the best way to get a hold of the word of God is to hear it regularly, read it regularly, study it regularly, memorize it regularly, and meditate on it. You get a handle on the word of God doing all five of those. If you don't do all five of those, you do not have a good handle on the word of God. And notice the thumb is the most important, the meditation, and thereby obedience back to being a bond-servant. We come to the word of God with humility and to obey it, not to judge it, but to obey the word of God, because that's how we know the will of God for our lives.

Knowledge is used four times here in this passage. This is far more than intellectual understanding, it is pursuing an intimate interaction with the truths of God, which yields the greatest transformation of all, a deeply intimate relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. Turn with me to John 8:31 and 32, please. John 8:31 and 32, a beautiful familiar passage, John 8:31 and 32. "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'" Amen. Great passage. So that's how we know him, by truly knowing the word of God and submitting to the word of God.

Second point, what the divine power has granted to us, back in 2 Peter 1:3 and 4. What the divine power has granted to us, and this is exciting. 3 and 4, "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." The Bible alone is true truth. The Bible alone is true truth. You cannot believe everything on Fox News, on CNN, or any other intake, any other source of news and information and advice except the word of God. Amen. God grants us everything we need to live the Christian life and to be godly, all things required for life and godliness is another translation. Everything means everything. We lack nothing but how "through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."

Christianity is based on objective, historical, revealed, rational truth from God that is intended to be understood and believed and obeyed. Here we are reminded of the resources we have through knowing Christ. God has provided blessing for Christians in all things pertaining to life and godly living. His spiritual resources are sufficient to meet

life's demands. Too often we think they're not, and we've got to go hither and yon, just like trying to find Waldo. We try to look to hither and yon and wring our hands when we just need to know God through his word and understand his word and obey his word. He's not going to show you more truth until you obey what you already know, typically. You know, there's a lot of false knowledge about God. How do we know the true knowledge of the true God? Through the second thing he's granted us, all right? He's granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness through what? His precious and magnificent promises, verse 4, his precious and magnificent promises, God's word. Great and precious promises have been given to God's people through the gospel, a gospel that provides everything believers need. It is through these that we may become partakers or sharers of the divine nature, the Holy Spirit, living like Jesus for Jesus' sake, for his glory. We become increasingly like Christ as we hear and obey the word of God.

It is through these promises that we become partakers of the divine nature. We share in his nature as we become increasingly like him. The promises include the promises Peter identifies in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:14-41, especially the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in new power, but they also include other promises such as likeness to God, Christ's return, eternal life in heaven, and more broadly, all the promises of Scripture that relate to the gift of new life in Christ. Believers have already escaped the world's corruption in that we belong to God, but the full revelation of such deliverance will be ours on the day of resurrection. The corruption Peter had in mind here is death and the coming judgment. Those who believe in Christ have escaped that future judgment even now. The corruption in the world is rooted in evil desires but you know what? If you're a true Christian, your want-to's have changed. You don't want to keep doing the things you did before, and if you call yourself a Christian and you still want to keep doing all that stuff, you need to check out your salvation. Amen. Our want-to is changed, beloved, if we are truly saved. We're not going to keep living the way we did before. Too many people are saying, "Oh, I can do this and get away with it," and they think there's some way that they're going to get away with it before God. But God says, "No, no, that is not My will and that is not honoring My Son."

Those who believe in Christ have escaped the future judgment even now. The corruption in the world is rooted in evil desires. Those who have come to know Christ have had their desires transformed. Now they love goodness. We love holiness. God's promises keep us from becoming tainted by the corruption that is in the world by lust, by evil desires, therefore, God's people look less and less like the world and more and more like Jesus. Christ calls to himself those whom God has saved, and this calling is brought about by his own glory and excellence. The word of God is the will of God. We mine the riches of God's precious and magnificent promises. It allows us then to build on a strong faith foundation and work out the word of God in our lives.

Let's look at a couple of passages that help us even unpack that more. Turn to Philippians 2, please. Philippians 2. Philippians 2:12 and 13. Philippians 2:12 and 13, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation," work out your salvation, "with fear and trembling." Are you doing that, Christian, work out your salvation with fear and

trembling? "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for," what? "For His good pleasure."

And then turn back a few pages to 2 Corinthians 7:1, please. 2 Corinthians 7:1. 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved," again, promises, "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Now, how do you do that? You have to be in the word and you've got to get the word in you, in your heart, in your soul, with the bond-servant perspective that, "I'm going to obey whatever my Master says I need to do here."

When we live according to God's promises in Scripture, we become partakers of the divine nature and look more and more like Jesus. 2 Corinthians 3:18, just a couple pages from where we were. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says... Oh, I was in 1 Corinthians. Get back over here. 2 Corinthians. There we go. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." Amen.

Are you over the Bible or is the Bible over you? Another illustration that someone had years ago that I've never forgotten and I think it's really helpful. When you look at the Scripture, do you come to it like you're over it, like, you know, I can judge it. It's optional. I can come to it like a cafeteria and pick and choose what I like and what I don't, and basically, I'm over the Bible or do you come under the Bible? Is the Bible supreme? Are you under God's word or are you over God's word? It seems like there's a whole bunch of professing Christians, I'm not saying they're all saved, but professing Christians that really come to the Bible over the Bible instead of under the Bible and then they wonder why their life is a mess. They wonder why they don't have peace. They wonder why they don't have grace. They wonder why they don't sense the presence of the Lord. You can't have both. You've got to come under God's word. You've got to submit to his word and love Jesus and you get to know him through his word. There's no other way. But too often we think we have a better way. We think there's a different way. We think that we can have our cake and eat it too and ignore the word, or choose to obey what we want to obey and only what we want to do, when we want to do it.

Is God's word the final authority of your thoughts, attitudes, actions, and reactions? Is God's word the final authority? You know, there are a lot of game shows and they say, "Is this your final answer?" You've seen those, "Is that your final answer?" Beloved, the word of God should be our final answer. Amen. We should not come thinking it's optional. It's the final answer. Whatever the question is, it's the final answer. Amen? Now, it should be our first answer, but I mean, we're not perfect, we're all sinners. It's not always my first answer when I get questions about what to do and how to do things or whatever, but if it's not our first answer, it should be our final answer. That's the point. Too often we don't let the word of God be the final answer to whatever the question is and then obey it. God's word should be our final answer to questions of conduct, questions of character, questions of relationships. Do you consider Scripture that powerful? Do you consider Scripture that important? Do you consider Scripture that all-

encompassing, based on the goodness of God and the sovereignty of God and the inerrancy and the sufficiency of Scripture?

It says here, back to 2 Peter 1, everything, everything, not some things, everything pertaining to life, living the life Jesus has for you, the best life you can live on this earth is a life of obedience, being in God's will and godliness. So we need to be careful what we watch, careful what we hear, careful what we listen to. Are you putting anyone's views of how to live life on a par with Scripture or above Scripture or under Scripture? You know, too often we watch certain news channels and we just want to wring our hands because we just get all this intake and all these things to worry about. We get our stomachs all churned up. But we need to be in the word more than on the TV or in other news channels and other sources of information to get us all worked up because God is in control. Amen. We don't understand the world. We don't understand government and all the different things and wars and rumors of wars. The Bible talks about that. But the question is, are we going to be calm? Are we going to have his peace that passes all understanding and all comprehension because we are in the word, and the word is washing over us regularly? And we're obeying it. We're submitting to it. We're not letting the ways of the world decide my countenance and my perspective and my understanding of life. Judge other works by Scripture, don't judge Scripture by other works, other books, other people and their sayings.

John MacArthur says this about this passage here in 1 Peter 1:3 and 4. He says, "Christ's power is the source of the believer's sufficiency and perseverance. The knowledge of Him," Christ, "here is not a superficial knowledge or a mere surface awareness of the facts about Christ, but a genuine personal sharing of life with Christ based on repentance of sin, and personal faith in Him. Christians do not become little gods, but they are new creations," 2 Corinthians 5:17, "and have the Holy Spirit living in them," 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20. "At the time of salvation, the believer escapes from the power which the rottenness in the world has over him through his fallen sinful nature." That's good.

So the word of God is the will of God, that means Scripture is God's provision to, here's one that'll surprise you, turn back to Psalm 23. You know, I love Psalm 23. I know we all do. Too often we just look at it at funerals. It's too good to just save for a funeral only. Psalm 23,

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake [not our sake, His sake]. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Isn't that wonderful? How does that apply? Here, of course, lots of ways but the word of God is the will of God, and that means Scripture is God's provision to keep us in the green pastures, right? Beside his still quiet waters of blessing and protection and guidance. If we don't submit to his word, we're not going to be there. We're going to be suffering. You think things are tough now, they're tougher if you disobey God's word, knowingly especially. If we ignore it or disobey the word, we are living in danger. It's like walking through a field of landmines rather than the green pastures that God has for us. Or the valley, even when we're through the valley that's difficult, he's with us fully and protecting us if we're honoring him by being in his word and his word being in us and obeying his word.

So, back to 2 Peter. So, we've seen what believers have received from the Lord in 1 and 2. We've seen what his divine power has granted to us in 3 and 4. Third point, what are we charged to do? What are we charged to do? Grow in the faith. Grow in the faith. Look at 5 through 7, please. "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love." We'll stop there for now. What are we charged to do? Diligently grow in the faith. Because of God's generous provision in Christ, believers are to build upon their foundation of faith, their initial acceptance of God's love with these Christian qualities, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. These graces are a chain of virtues, a chain of virtues. These are the fruit of sharing in God's divine nature. It begins with faith and ends with love. Faith, trusting God, is the root of all the virtues, and love is the goal of these, the climax of the Christian life. This list does not reflect a legalistic code, but rather the desires and qualities of a transformed heart. It is God's will that you and I diligently work at growing in our faith and knowledge of Jesus to look more and more like him by exemplifying these, but guess what? If we're not in the word, we don't even know them, right? But if we know them, we still can either amen them and that's all, or we can amen and obey them and seek to submit and live accordingly as the Lord convicts us through his Spirit and through his word.

So in verse 5, Peter here exhorts Christians not to merely confess faith in Christ, but actually to live as he taught. Faith must take concrete form in life. He says "now for this very reason" because of all the precious and magnificent promises God has given believers, and because we have received everything pertaining to life and godliness, we cannot be indifferent or self-satisfied. Such an abundance of divine grace calls for total dedication. That's what he says, applying all diligence. You know what that means? Maximum effort. We should be all-in on the Christian life, not settling for mediocrity, not settling for, "Well, you know, I'm only doing what So-and-so is doing and they, you know, if they're getting by like this and they've been a Christian, professing Christian longer, you know, it must be okay for me to get by," you know, just kind of rock along. That's not the attitude of the Scripture. Maximum effort. The Christian life is not lived to the honor of God without effort. I'll say that again. The Christian life is not lived to the honor of God without effort. Now, the effort doesn't save us, but it's because we're saved.

Even though God has poured his divine power into the believer, the Christian himself is required to make every disciplined effort alongside of what God has done.

Let's turn back to Colossians 1:28 and 29. Colossians 1, just back a few more pages. Cautions 1:28 and 29. And I know this is Pastor Ty's heart, I know this is the church's heart, "We proclaim Him," Jesus, "admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." We have the Holy Spirit working mightily in us, but we've got to cooperate. We've got to submit. We've got to obey based on the word of God and the will of God through the Spirit. Even though God has poured his divine power into the believer, the Christian himself is required to make every disciplined effort. I said that, I'm sorry. Christian, you are to supply or add to your faith, supplement your faith, is what some translations say. All that means is to give lavishly and generously. Your part, our part, is to add to the faith God has given us lavishly and generously these qualities that we're going to look at and unpack. Ted, you're gonna like this. This word, supply here, means to supplement your faith supply, to add to your faith. In Greek culture, this word was used for a choir master who was responsible for supplying everything that was needed for his choir. How about that? So, join the choir.

So, God has given us faith and all the grace necessary for godliness. We already saw that in 3 and 4. We add to those by our diligent devotion to personal righteousness. We're probably familiar with 1 Timothy 4:7b, "discipline yourself for," what? "The purpose of godliness." Same principle. If you call yourself a Christian, are you demonstrating diligent devotion to growing in your faith? We should never stop growing. Never stop growing. Do others see Jesus in you or do they see your temper? Or do they see your pride? Or do they see all these other things? Now, yes, we all still have, you know, those things but the Holy Spirit and the word of God and the word of God in our hearts and our lives should lessen those and increase these qualities so they see Jesus through us, despite the fact that we're still sinners standing in the need of prayer.

So let's look at these virtues, these qualities. Moral excellence, some translations call it virtue. Moral excellence. In Greek, this word meant the God-given ability to perform heroic deeds. It also meant the quality of life which made someone stand out as excellent. Peter is here writing of moral energy, the power that performs deeds of excellence. Knowledge is understanding, correct insight, and truth, properly comprehended and applied. This quality involves a diligent study and pursuit of truth in the word of God. This is not seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake. You know, knowledge puffs up but love edifies, 1 Corinthians 8:1 says. It is here seeking to know our Lord and Savior better, to serve him better, to love him better, to know him better, to look more like him.

And then in verse 6, self-control. This is holding oneself in. Holding oneself in. In Peter's day, self-control was used of athletes who were to be self-restrained and self-disciplined. Thus, a Christian is to control his flesh, passions, and bodily desires rather than allowing himself to be controlled by them. Turn with me, please, to 1 Corinthians 9:23 through 27. 1 Corinthians 9:23 through 27. 1 Corinthians 9:23 through 27. "I do all things," Paul says,

"I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." You see, we're to do all things for the sake of the gospel.

And while we're right there on the same page, another one of my favorite verses is right there at 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." Yes, there's things we endure. There's a lot of things we endure in this life, but we have self-control to bring glory to God and keep on enduring it, and to bring him glory.

Paul identified self-control as one of the fruits of the Spirit, you may recall, in Galatians 5:23, as well as listed here. Believers who live a godly life exercise self-discipline and are able to restrain themselves so that they do not capitulate to sinful desires.

Perseverance, the next one, that's patience, that's endurance in doing what is right. Endurance in doing what is right, not giving in to temptation or trial. Perseverance is spiritual staying power that will die before it gives in. It is the virtue that will endure, not simply with resignation, but with vibrant hope. We have hope. Despite the world around us and all that we know that is going wrong, we have Jesus, we have hope, and we have a future with him in heaven forever and ever.

The next is godliness. Godliness. This means to live reverently, loyally, and obediently toward God in a way that pleases him. Believers have been given everything we need for life and godliness, we know that from verse 3, now we see that the imperative stands on the indicative. Christ has given believers everything to be godly, yet we must pursue godliness. Did you get that? We have everything, but we've still got to pursue it. We've got to work it out. Godliness, piety, living a life that is like Christ. We should do so since Jesus is going to return and we know he is, 2 Peter 3:11 and other Scriptures.

And then brotherly kindness, brotherly kindness, that's brotherly affection, mutual sacrifice for one another. The focus is on love between fellow believers. It's just like here in this room, fellow believers, the church. For a change, go right instead of left. Let's go to 1 John 4:20, 1 John 4:20, just a few pages over to the right. 1 John 4:20. "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." Brotherly love is important. We need to give each other the benefit of the doubt. Amen. And when we look at these qualities, we're not to be looking at judging others, we're to be judging ourselves first and foremost. Brotherly love, brotherly kindness, brotherly affection.

And then, of course, the pinnacle here is love. Love is action, not abstract. Too often we in America especially have that, you know, love is just this, you know, thing, you love French fries, you love everything, the dog, you love your wife, you love everything. You know, love has all these different connotations. But love in the Scripture is action, it's not abstract. It involves overlooking the sins of others against you, if possible, and being ready to forgive insults and unkind words and deeds. Turn back a page to 1 Peter 4, :8. 1 Peter 4, 8, please. 1 Peter 4, 8. "Above all," above all, that's a bit important, above all, this is so important, "keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." Guess what? We are sinners that commit a multitude of sins. Amen. We're all sinners. We all commit a multitude of sins. We need God's love and forgiveness and we need each other's love and forgiveness. Love covers. God's love covers. It's an action. It's not something we just say, "Oh yeah," and then we go on and then we hold a grudge, or we get bitter, or we get whatever. No, love covers a multitude of sins for the glory of God and the good of the body.

As you study this list and look at your life, which one or two of these qualities are you convicted that you need to prayerfully seek God for more help in that area? I like to use the term battle verses. I encourage you, if there's an area that the Lord is convicting you today of, find a battle verse. Maybe one of the ones we've looked at or otherwise find one or get someone to help you find a battle verse and then memorize it, meditate on it to help you exemplify Christ to others in that area of your life, to grow in that area of your life, and then to help you apply the put-off, put-on principle in Ephesians 4:22-24, in that area.

And then the fourth and final point, big point is this, verses 8 through 11, judge yourself, are these virtues evident and increasing in your life? Judge yourself, are these virtues evident and increasing in your life? Evident and increasing, evident and increasing. Look at 8 through 11 with me, please. "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent," there's that word again, "diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you." God's will is that these virtues are increasing in your life from the day of your salvation until you go be with Jesus. Useful and fruitful Christians have an abundance of these qualities. On the other hand, those who lack them are blind and short-sighted because they have forgotten their purification from their former sins, meaning the fact that you were saved from all those sins before you came to Christ, when you came to Christ. A lifelong pattern of growth in Christ-like character is expected of believers and is the key to fruitful ministry. A lifelong pattern. By contrast, knowledge of Christ is ineffective, useless, and unfruitful unless accompanied by a life that increasingly exhibits the qualities here in verses 5 through 7.

So here we see the word unfruitful, that means unproductive. With these virtues increasing in one's life, a Christian will not be ineffective or useless, a Christian will be, if he's unproductive, he's unfruitful, then he will be indistinguishable from an evildoer or

a superficial believer. But when these qualities are increasing in a Christian's life, there is the display of the divine nature of Christ, of the Holy Spirit living within us. Verse 9, short-sighted, even to blindness it says. A professing Christian who is missing these virtues mentioned above is therefore unable to discern his true spiritual condition and thus can have no assurance of his salvation, forgotten his purification from his former sins. The failure to diligently pursue these spiritual virtues produces spiritual amnesia. Such a person will have no confidence about his profession of faith. He may be saved, he may possess the blessings of verses 3 and 4, but without the excellencies of verses 5 through 7, he will live in doubt and fear.

Now, in verses 10 and 11, because of God's grace, gifts, and the knowledge of Christ, we are to make every effort to prove the reality of our calling and election to salvation. We do so by godly living, just like we saw in verses 5 through 7. Now, see what the two results are that follow. First, we will never stumble, meaning apostasy, a falling away from the faith. If we do these things, God's good works are evidence of and give assurance of salvation, though they are never the basis for it. Peter's wording does not imply that followers of Christ can ever apostatize. Those who do so were never really called, elected, or born again.

So, to make the point again, look at John 6. Turn back, please, to John 6:39 through 40. John 6:39 through 40. John 6:39 through 40. "This is the will of Him who sent Me," Jesus says, "that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Amen.

And then turn a few pages to John 10:26 through 29. John 10:26 through 29. "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." So that's a very clear announcement of the fact that everyone who claims to be a Christian is not a Christian, a true Christian.

We will receive a glorious entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as a second result here, back in 2 Peter. So we see we will never stumble, meaning we're not going to lose our salvation, and we will receive a glorious entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the hope and reality for a believer who lives a faithful, fruitful life here on earth. A believer who pursues the virtues in this passage will not only enjoy assurance in the present life, but a full, rich reward in the life to come. I want to read a couple passages there. 1 Corinthians 4:5. 1 Corinthians 4:5. "Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God." So we're to look, we're to wait until we get to be with Jesus for praise, you know, ultimately.

And then the very last book and the very last page of the Bible, Revelation 22:12. "Behold," Jesus says, "I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." That's where our reward is, right? Jesus in heaven.

Would you say that you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? You know, we always assume they're, you know, a group like this that everyone is and everyone online, but in all probability, that is not the case. I know, to me, a good summary of the gospel is four words, God, man, Christ, response. The God who created the heavens and the earth created you and me in his image. He is love, he is righteous and holy, and he is worth knowing but mankind was perfect until the fallen man in the Garden of Eden. The first man and woman doubted God's word and chose to disobey God, thereby bringing evil into this world and into their lives, and ever since, people are sinners by nature and by choice. We are in rebellion against a holy God and we cannot save ourselves. God, man, Christ. Christ came from heaven to save sinners. He was God. He is God. God's only Son, God in the flesh. He left heaven to become a man, to take our sin upon himself, that whoever believes in him should not perish in a place called hell, but have everlasting life in heaven, as well as abundant life now. Response. Our response to be his disciple must be to repent, to turn from our sin, from living for ourselves and live for him, to submit our lives to him, not holding nothing back. We must realize that sin is so awful it cost God his only Son. No one comes to the Father except through the Son. There are not many ways to heaven like many people believe. There's only one way, Jesus Christ.

So if you've not ever come to Christ, I pray you'll do it now, or you'll pull one of us aside afterwards and let us help you to come to him. But for those of us who are Christians, we know we're saved, what is the will of God for you and me? The word of God is the will of God. Are you known for the qualities listed in 2 Peter 1? In John 3:8, after Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born again, he said this, Jesus said this, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." So just like the origin of the wind is invisible and yet its effects are visible, are observable, there is something different about those who are truly born again, those born of the Spirit that can be observed by the Lord, by you, yourself, and by those around you.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Do you consider God's word to be his will, or do you consider it optional? Are you living in the will of God? Do you consider God's word and his promises magnificent, precious, or dull and boring and optional? Where do you need to, where do you need to repent? Where have you thought you had a better idea? Where have you thought you were the exception to God's word? Humility, teachability, and repentance are beautiful virtues. Allow the Holy Spirit to take his precious word today and minister, cleanse, and change you more into the image of Christ.

Father, I pray that Your Holy Spirit would work a mighty work in this place. We thank You that Your word does not return void. And so Lord, we just submit to it now in whatever way, shape or form You ask each of us to do so. We commit this time to You to examine our hearts, examine our lives, examine our attitudes, examine our actions,

examine the words that we share. Lord, forgive us where we have failed You. Thank You, You never leave us. You never forsake us. You're so patient with us. May we truly glean something today from Your word in 2 Peter 1 that we will take with us and be more like Jesus because of studying Your word together as a family of God today. And all this we ask in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. Amen.

May God bless you. Thank you for listening attentively to the word of God.