

shortsighted

*Lakeville Christian Fellowship*

**“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”**                      **II Peter 1:9**

Sunday August 10, 2008  
Morning Worship at Williams Camp  
Lakeville, Massachusetts  
[www.lcfbaptist.org](http://www.lcfbaptist.org)

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Sermon by Daniel J. Casieri

**Reading: II Peter 1:8-2.1**

**“...short-sighted even to blindness...”**

For the past two Sunday sessions we have examined this text and spoke about the Apostle Peter’s urging for those who possess faith in Christ to ‘partake of the divine nature’. We have seen that with our faith comes great privilege, ‘*exceedingly great and precious promises (v.4.)*’, as well as the great responsibility ‘*for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith...*’. It becomes our duty to increase the quality of our faith by a devoted life of cultivating virtue and the various other graces that have been made accessible to those who love God and have surrendered

concerned with finances. Health is a great blessing and enables us to bless others. The apostle, however, shows us how easily we make idols of blessings, how easily we forget to look inwardly, how readily we neglect to look at, to name, and to route out our sinful indulgences, and bathe our prayer lives with wants and wish lists, rather than with willingness to repent, to be given a grateful heart, to develop a diligent inner man who sees himself as God sees him. And so he says....

**v.10,11. “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

Health, wealth, and ease, will never supply an entrance for you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior. Virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and love, is the only entrance. These are not works. They are the fruit, the proof, the evidence, of God’s work in you. Doubts about our salvation are portrayed by some as sinful even satanic. Yet the apostle raises doubt in our minds regarding our salvation. Not doubts in his mind concerning the disciples, but the doubts that should and must reside in anyone’s mind, when they become content to live in persistent sin and self-serving.

Be diligent to make your call and election sure. In other words there is grounds for not being sure. There is evidence that demands a verdict. Evidence of actions that are ungodly, habits, indulgences, even whole lifestyles that are ungodly, ought to inspire doubts. I may even go so far as to say that chronic sinfulness, or even chronic slothfulness toward producing godly virtue, ought to be an unimpeachable source of doubt in a true believer. Only an unbeliever should be comfortable while he is yet sinning, and excusing himself, and removing himself from all that is called godly. And because such things of so great importance, and because of his great love for those to whom he writes he commits himself to the following, saying....

**vs.12,13. “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and established in the**

resort to our own terms as Christians is by definition to fail to persevere.

And so if we who do not persevere well in these fundamental things we must hope that Peter’s list is not a logical progression of building one grace upon another because not to persevere in such things is to forfeit a mature and reliable expression of the succeeding graces, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. And even if such things are not given in a progressive sequence it is unreasonable to assume that if we do not persevere in some things that we will magically do so in others. To not persevere in virtue then is to persevere in vice. And this brings us to the next section of the epistle.

**v.9. “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”**

Think of the implications of this statement. First we must recognize that it is the apostle’s contention that those who lack the superior graces that attend faith lack them due to negligence and not lack of opportunity. If your faith is weak, if you are *short-sighted* it is due to lack of diligence on your part because our diligent and effective Savior has provided opportunity to become full-sighted in the Lord. In short, the blindness of the elect is a willful blindness, a willful forgetfulness. A state of persistent and abiding sin. Forgetfulness is a childish and irresponsible excuse to remain an offense. Forgetfulness, in the area of what is cost to redeem us, is a great sin, and the apostle will use stronger and stronger language to illustrate this as the epistle goes on.

The Latin designation of the term *shortsighted* was rendered *feeling with the hand, striving*, or, *groping*. The people of God do not need to grope, though some of us do grope, and feel, and try things out of ignorance, forgetting the declaration that opens this epistle which states our sufficiency in Christ, saying: “*His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.*” Now this declaration has been perverted by some and presented as a promise, as though the gospel by itself, by its existence, by our intellectual accenting to it, will somehow automatically provide us with every good spiritual blessing. Some go further to conclude that the statement is a promise of automatic

their lives to Christ. Faith, we have seen, does not end with believing, but goes on to spiritual self-mastery and a readiness to love as God loves. Faith is powerful to save, but comes to us in its rawest form. It must be clothed with righteousness and so Peter says add to it virtue. And though virtue is indeed a sublime and spiritual achievement he goes further and bids us to add to this virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control, to self-control, perseverance. Oh, how the Body of Christ does need to learn to persevere in the attending graces of faith.

We need to persevere in sound doctrine. To persevere in our uninterrupted, religious attendance, and no acceptable excuses for not keeping holy the Lord's Day. Friends, persevere in worshiping Christ, in witnessing your religious love of Christ, your joy to attend worship always and without excuse. We need to persevere in coming to our houses of worship prepared for worship. We need to come on time for worship. Chronic lateness for worship may be more sinful than it appears to you. It is a statement to God that your schedule and concerns are more important than His schedule and His concerns. Being late on a regular basis represents a practical division in the body between being available to serve and being available to being served.

We think of lateness to worship, or tardiness in general, in our society as such a light thing, such an acceptable, even a sophisticated flaw. But how do you suppose that a person, or your children, will learn to persevere in great things, if they are taught to be frivolous in small things. Remember this principle of building faith: *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much (Luke 16:10)."* We panic if the Lord arrives late to deliver us from trials or to answer our prayers.

We need to persevere, as the church at large, in things like marriage, things like home worship and Scripture reading. We need to persevere in not leading ourselves, or our children, into temptation. We need to persevere in keeping a safe measure of separateness from the world, worldly pleasures and pursuits. We never persevere for Christ on our own schedule, but on His. We never persevere on our own terms. To

**present truth. Yet, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you...."** The disciples must be diligent to cultivate the higher graces of their faith, and the teachers must be diligent to remind them of their duties before God, of the pitfalls of negligence and fleshly indulgences, of the importance of examining ourselves, our motives, our truest and deepest desires. **"...knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me."**

The aged apostle knows that life is fleeting, that time is short. He also knows that the prophecy of Christ concerning his death must be near and must be fulfilled. We may recall from the last chapter of the gospel of John what the Lord said to Peter: *"'Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will carry you where you do not wish.' This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'"* (Jn.21.18)."

**v.15. "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease."** It seems the apostle refers here to the written word, the testimony of those who personally witnessed the death, burial, resurrection, even the transfiguration of Christ. But not the word only. Rather he is in the very process of committing these truths to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (as Paul said to Timothy, II Tim.2.2). It is of primary importance that we do not regard the gospel as a *cunningly devised fable* as there were so many of such things circulating in those days - and not less so in ours - which without the authority of the eye witnesses hoped to gain stature as religious leaders among those who were untaught and unstable.

We will deal in succeeding weeks with the power by which Peter makes his case for the gospel and with what force he warns, even condemns, those who secretly bring in destructive heresies which deny the Lord and the central truths of the Lord's gospel.

provision of every desirable material blessing, including monetary wealth and physical health. It is interesting that though the Lord does indeed bless and heal, other than an initial lesson of learning to trust Him, blessings like monetary wealth and personal health are shown in Scripture to be hindrances to spiritual growth and not accessories necessarily.

Think of Jacob's crippling injury in his hip, his gift from the Lord. Think of Mephibosheth, lame in his feet yet the object of great grace, Paul's thorn in the flesh, and Timothy's frequent ailments. These are the kinds of things prescribed by Paul as counter measures to excessive pride. He writes: "*a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure (II Cor. 12.7).*"

Think of the corruptive influence of great wealth, even upon great men. Solomon comes to mind. Balak, king of the Moabites (Num.22), who would use his wealth to bribe a prophet to curse Israel even against the clear will of God a subject Peter will mention later in this epistle, saying of Balaam that he *'loved the wages of unrighteousness.'* He then speaks of a *dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice....restraining the madness of the prophet (II Pet.2.15,16).*" Think of Simon Magus who Peter condemned and his money with him for believing he could buy what God freely gives. Think of the rich man from the Lord's parable who fared sumptuously every day with no thought to God and poor Lazarus who was reduced to begging, but was yet righteous in the sight of God and so blessed with eternal comforts.

And what of those principles that pertain to austerity, even poverty, as not lessening, perhaps enhancing, spiritual devotion and maturity, a diligent prayer life, and humble obedience. "*Better a handful with quietness / Than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind (Ecc.4.6).*" Think of the gospel narrative which says: "*Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this*

*poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood (Mark 12.41-44).*"

Think of Peter himself who said to a lame beggar at the temple gate: "*Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk (Acts 3.6).*"

The things that pertain to life and godliness are not those things we constantly desire in abundance and lust after. They are not the "twin virtues of modernity" as Francis Shaeffer called them, i.e., personal peace and affluence. They are at the same time subtler and more powerful and they come from focusing our eyes and our spiritual energies inwardly. For great wealth and physical stature, even notoriety and great wisdom, do not produce in us what God desires to see there. "*For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence (I Cor. 1.27-29).*"

The things that pertain to life and godliness that the short-sighted and forgetful so often disregard are those very things that we so seldom pray for. And those material things that we so continually pray for so often crowd out the spiritual. Again we may not escape the obvious that intermittent attendance for worship or chronic lateness, unresolved offenses, immoral relationships, inordinate concerns over money and possessions, or even the subtle preoccupation with physical health and well being that has become the idol of our times, are revealing illustrations of how our own material and temporal concerns crowd out God's concerns to build.

Some of the things that we pray for are good things. We need to be