



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Peter 1:5-11

2 Peter

"Blessed Assurance"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this evening is 2 Peter 1, and we're going to look at verses 5-11, but let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for this time together and this opportunity we have again to look into the Scriptures and look into this book by Peter. We pray that as we do, you bless you. We've come to an important subject. Every subject, of course, is important in the Scriptures, but a very practical subject about the assurance of our salvation. And so I pray that as we look at this and consider the things that Peter has written and the things that may trouble each of us, at some time or another, you would bless us and give us understanding, and direct in your thinking.

I pray that you build us up in the faith, through our time together this evening, and we pray for other classes that go on, that you bless them, and build up your people in the faith. And then as we return to the Throne of Grace at the end of the hour, we pray that you would bless our time of prayer. We do pray for ourselves now, and pray you bless us, and pray for those who still may be traveling, and for those of us, as we leave, that as we travel this evening, we will be safe. Bless us now, we pray, and the things that we will consider, we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

One thing that every Christian should have is assurance, the assurance of his or her salvation. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and it is God's sovereign work, from beginning to end, and nothing can separate us from it. Now that's an important statement to make, but it's one that's certainly made throughout Scripture.

We have that, for example in Romans: 8:38-39. Paul finishes that magisterial eighth chapter of the Book of Romans by telling us that nothing can separate us, and

he gives all kinds of examples, " ...nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Believers in Jesus Christ are eternally secure, and that's clear from that text in Romans 8, and it's clear from other text in the Scriptures, such as, Romans 11:29, "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

God does not call us Himself and change His mind. His calling us is irrevocable. Philippians 1:6, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." God begins the work. He doesn't stop halfway through or toward the end. He finishes it. He finishes everything he begins.

And there are many other passages. John 10 is perhaps the best known to us, and others as well, that teach that all believers in Jesus Christ are eternally saved. That is an assurance that we can have as believers in Christ, and not only one that we can have, we need to have. We should have that assurance.

Not all Christians have it though, and there are various reasons for that. Some lack assurance because they have had theology, Arminianism, Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism – it's all basically the same thing. There are variations within those "isms" that may distinguish them. But basically, whether it's Pelagianism or Arminianism, it is a theology that teaches man is the initiator of salvation and basically, he carries it out, and therefore, he is the closer of salvation.

And that means that, in-between, he is the sustainer of salvation. It's a man-oriented theology, not a God-oriented or centered theology. And so it depends upon me to save myself, I can lose the salvation that I, at one time, obtained. That is at least the teaching of that theology. And so if you have that kind of theology then, naturally, you will at times question your salvation, and wonder if you perhaps have not lost it in the meantime. Or people feel that they're too sinful for God's salvation. They have a strong view of their own unworthiness – and that's not altogether bad. Of course, there are reasons for that, but the problem is, very often, they have a weak view of God's love.

They lack confidence in Christ. They don't understand grace. Or sometimes, it's just due to sin. People get caught in a web of sin. They get caught in a pattern of rebellion. Sin is enslaving, and people get caught up in that, and that can certainly affect one's thinking and one's thought about whether he or she is safe. But whatever

the reason, assurance of salvation is possible, and it is necessary, not for salvation. A person can lack assurance of salvation and still be saved.

And I suppose it's certainly true to say a person can have assurance and not be saved. It doesn't determine whether we are or whether we're not saved. But what it does do is determine the progress we'll make in salvation and whether or not we'll be productive and joyful Christians, so it is a very important thing. And assurance is what Peter urges here in the text that we look at this evening in 2 Peter 1:5-11.

In verse 10, Peter tells us to "be certain about God's calling and choosing us." He says, "be diligent about it. Make certain of this about yourself." The King James version has, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." And the necessary step in having that assurance is believing in the Doctrine of Unconditional Election, believing in the calling and the choosing.

And I take the calling here that he speaks of, not as the call of the gospel but of the call of God in irresistible grace. It's His work of effecting in time, the Decree of Election that He made, in eternity past, before time. But these are the subjects that we'll look at in our text in 2 Peter 1:5-11. It begins with an exhortation, "to living according to the life, the new life we have in Christ," according to all the blessings that we have as Christians, that which Peter explained for us in the first four verses of the chapter.

We are the objects of God's love. We're the objects of God's Sovereign Grace. He gave us faith. He speaks of the faith that we have received. It was allotted to us. It's a gift. That's grace. We begin our Christian life through faith, but it's a faith that God initiates within us. And having entered into that life through faith, we are always in the sphere or the realm of grace and peace. We have that and "we have many precious and magnificent promises," he said.

Perhaps the most amazing of all the blessings that Peter outlines there in the first four verses is the one in verse 4, that "we have become partakers of the divine nature." That's an arresting statement. We spent some time on it last week on what it means to be partakers of the divine nature. And what it doesn't mean is that we possess the essence of deity. We're not gods. That's not what he's saying. We don't share in God's incommunicable attributes, such as self existence.

We share in His communicable attributes. We share in the attributes of His power, and His love, and His joy, and His wisdom and these kinds of things. And that

being the case, because we have such a great privilege to possess that, to be partakers of the Divine nature, we're to live in that. We're to live that life. That's what Peter tells us here in verse 5, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge."

In other words because of your great position and privileges, give great effort to righteous conduct. That's the idea in the statement, "applying all diligence." It makes something like, making a strong effort. It certainly does speak of putting forth a great deal of effort in these things. And that's also the idea in the word, supply. "In your faith supply moral excellence" and all of the other virtue that Peter lists here. That word, supply, means supply abundantly.

There are different examples that can be given of the use of that word, but there's one that has been cited in one of the ancient papyrus texts of the early first century. In fact, it dates to about 30 AD, before Peter wrote this letter, but it gives us a sense of the meaning of this word, supply, because it's a little text, a little piece of papyrus in which was written a man's complaint about his wife. Evidently, it was some kind of a legal dispute, and he wrote, "I, for my part, provided my wife in a manner that exceeded my resources." I'd be curious to know what the wife would have said in response to his claim, but he says, he "exceeded" his resources. That's the idea here, and that's really what Peter is getting at when he says what we are to do with these virtues.

We are to supply them exceedingly. So we're to use great diligence in that, and we are to make an ample, abundant supply of these virtues that he lists, which makes clear to us, I think, that the Christian life is not a casual life. It's a life of grace. It's a life of peace. And Christ tells us that His "yoke is light." It's not a burdensome life. I don't mean to suggest that.

But it is a life of activity. It's a life of constant growth. One of the old commentators of the 19th century, James Moffitt, quotes a saying that, "The Christian life must not be an initial spasm followed by a chronic inertia." It's not just a moment of enthusiasm without progress. I suppose it is in some people's lives, but it's not intended to be that way. We are always to be maturing as Christians, developing as Christians, developing what William Berkley called, "The loveliest and most splendid life." That's certainly true.

We have the capability to have the best life of anyone in the world, and we should be developing that life. We do that by supplying the seven virtues that are listed in verses 5-8, and I'm counting faith as one of those virtues. That's where he begins, and then he says, supply to that, but counting faith, there are seven virtues. And they're structured in a way that has led some to describe it as, "a ladder of virtue."

There's a progression to them. Peter begins with faith, because this is where we begin in the Christian life, and it is by faith that we continue in the Christian life. And it is by faith that we experience the great promises that he's mentioned. He gives us some of those promises, as we pointed out last week, in the first chapter, but he doesn't give us a list of all the magnificent promises that he speaks of here, the "precious and magnificent promises."

But to have them, we have to exercise faith. We live by faith, and as we do that, we experience these promises in our life. So Paul says, "In your faith supply" and then he says, "moral excellence." This was for the Greeks, the supreme virtue. It was excellence of achievement, and we as Christians should be known for that. We should be known for excellence in all that we do – whatever we do in life, whatever our profession is, whatever we do outside of our profession – our lives should be known for excellence. That is nothing more than being a child of God. That's what would be expected of a child of God.

Just look at God for a moment. We introduced Him in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. And what do we see in Genesis 1? He's working. He's creating. He's calling everything into existence out of nothing, and He does it very well. In fact, at the end of it, at the end of Genesis 1, He looks at the creation, and He says that it was all, "very good." So God created everything, and He made it very good, and He didn't rest until He completed it.

It's not until everything's finished that, on the seventh day, He rested. Now we share His nature. We share something of the character of God, and so we should do the same. We should be the same as He, because He is a God who works and produces things with excellence, with perfection, and we should strive to do the same. In fact, we should consider our work and our entire life to be one of worship.

Let me give you one verse that I think would support that, and that's 1 Corinthians 10:31, where the apostle says, "whether then you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." And he can't put it any more basically

than that. He takes the most fundamental things of life, eating and drinking – do that "to the glory of God." Well if I'm to do that to the glory of God, then certainly I'm to work to the glory of God, and I'm to carry out every aspect of my life to the glory of God.

The Puritans were famous of this idea that work is worship. I heard someone talk about that one time, critically of the Puritans. It was on probably National Public Radio or something like that, and he was giving some lecture on the Puritans, and he said that the Puritans were workaholics. They worshipped work. No, they didn't worship work, and that's a misunderstanding of their idea of considering work to be worship. They viewed all of life as an act of worship. And certainly they considered their work, their labor – whether it was as a merchant, or a farmer, or a physician – or whatever it was, to be an act of worship. And that's just consistent with what Paul tells us to do everything to the glory of God. And so, because they did that, they were diligent in their work, and they developed what has become known as, "the Puritan work ethic." And those who follow the Puritan work ethic usually are very successful in their jobs, and very successful in their lives.

And a society that's known for that is known for that is an industrial society. It has good effects that are benefits from considering your work and your entire life to be one of worship. But the point I'm simply making is, whatever we do in life, whether we are in business, or in medicine, or law, or simply a laborer, or a brick layer, whatever – we are to be striving for excellence, and that certainly includes preachers as well. They, in particular, should be striving for excellence.

And what that means is there shouldn't be any Saturday Night Specials. I never heard of a Saturday Night Special but that's where a preacher stays up late at night, putting a sermon together on Saturday night, because he hadn't been working on it all week. Sometimes I know that there's pressure and there's things to do, but that really should never happen. It happens a lot, I'm told, but it should never happen. A minister should be working all week long, studying and preparing, because that's his calling and that's his job, and it's a high calling.

Its true of everybody. We should all strive for excellence. So Peter tells us to be excellent, but I think this is particularly true in regard to our relationships, that they are to be a service to God and a service to man, or to be effective in that. Our relationships with one another are to be excellent. Now, "to moral excellence," Peter

says, "add knowledge." And that follows logically, doesn't it. I mean we can't know what excellence is without knowledge. We can't know what God considers to be excellent unless we know Him. We know His character. We know His will.

And so to have that knowledge, we have to be diligent in our study and meditation of His word. In our attendance at the meetings where His Word is taught. We have to give time to that in order to have knowledge. And add that to our moral excellence, and have our moral excellence trained or governed by that, by knowledge. And knowledge then leads to self control. That's in verse 6. Self control is self mastery. It's the opposite of the excesses of the false teachers that we'll read about in chapter 2. And the opposite of the sexual abuses of the pagan world, which was so common in that time. And it's common in our own day.

Self-control is taking hold of one's self, and controlling one's passions and desires, holding that. The word has the idea of holding. And so it's holding them in, holding them down. It's taking control of that. It's just the noun form of the term. Paul uses the verbal form in 1 Corinthians 7:9 of the unmarried. And he said, "if they do not have self-control, let them marry." So it has to do with control.

But the word, self-control, is also used in Galatians 5:23, and it is a fruit of the Spirit. So while we are to exercise it, it is also a manifestation of the Spirit's work in a person, resulting in human activity. I don't think we should lose sight of that. We need to put everything in it's proper perspective. And I'll come back to this toward the end. But all of this presupposes the Grace of God. We cannot apply the kind of diligence that Peter tells us to do, apart from the Grace of God.

This is a fruit of the Spirit. This is what will be produced. The Spirit does this as well as perseverance. That's the next virtue. It comes out of self-control. I'm sure a Christian does not give up. He endures through trials, and "it is through many trials," Paul tells us, "that we enter into the Kingdom of God." And that's we can expect, but we are to persevere. We are to continue in the faith. To perseverance, we're to add godliness.

And I think, to put that another way, we are to imitate Christ, to be like Him. And that leads to brotherly kindness. That word, "brotherly kindness" is one that's familiar to us, because literally, the Greek word is, "Philadelphia," brotherly love. So that is a companion to godliness. Those who love God will love men. If you love the Lord, you will love His people. That's what the Lord told the lawyer.

You remember that well-known discussion or dialogue that the Lord had with the lawyer in Matthew 22. It's in the synoptics as well, but the lawyer asked Him what was the greatest commandment of all, and Jesus told him that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and then He added to that, and your neighbor as yourself. The two go together. You can't separate the two. Believers in Jesus Christ pursue kindness toward one another. And according to 1 John 4:20, that is one of the evidences of discipleship, loving the brother, and that involves bearing one another's burdens, taking care of each other.

Now the crowning virtue is love. That's the last one that he mentions. This is agape. It's different from Philadelphia. It's a different word. They sometimes overlap, and so I'm not sure we can press a great distinction here between these two words, but this is the last virtue the he lists, the well-known word for love, agape. It's been called "the queen of the virtues." It is unconditional love. It is selfless love, sacrificial love.

"God is love." John writes that in 1 John 4:8. Agape love flows from God. And so God's people, since they are in Christ and since they participate in the divine nature, must abound in love. And we are to strive for that. We are to apply ourselves to that. It is a spiritual virtue that the Spirit of God bears, and that's the first of the fruit of the Spirit, in Galatians 5. And so it's a work of God, but we are to strive to produce it.

In 2 Peter 1:8, Peter comments on the benefits of doing that, the benefits of these virtues. He gives reasons why we should build them up in our lives. They are necessary if we are to have successful lives, 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." Our knowledge of God and of the Christian life is developed and refined by obedience. Peter puts a lot of emphasis on knowledge in the first chapter.

Knowledge leads to action. We can't act properly. We won't really be obedient if we don't know how to act. That's obvious. I think that really goes without saying. But, having said that, having said that we need knowledge in order to act properly and to understand how we are to act, action leads to deeper knowledge and understanding. Experience informs our knowledge. Knowledge isn't just intellectuals. It's also experimental. It's also gained through activity through living the life that we learn that we are to live.

We learn by doing. That's how we truly learn. I'll give you an illustration of that from my own experience, from a conversation I had with Dr. Johnson, many years ago – I think it was back in 1974 probably. I went up to his office while I was a student at the seminary, and I was talking to him about a school related matter. But in the course of the conversation, he asked me what I planned on doing when I got out of the seminary.

I said, well maybe I'd like to be a professor. And that kind of stopped him. He didn't like that. And he asked me, "Why does everybody want to be a professor?" And everybody did. Everybody wanted to be a professor. We were all going to be professors. I really couldn't answer him very well. He said, "Paul loved the church." And the point was, "Why don't you want to go minister in the church?"

He impressed on me the importance of ministering in the church. And then he made the point, having said that Paul loved the church, he said that he had studied under men who were authorities in the apostle Paul. He studied under them in Britain and in Europe. And he said, "These so-called authorities didn't understand Paul, and the reason they didn't understand Paul, even though, academically they were known, their credentials were in that field of study, they didn't know Paul because they had never lived the life that Paul lived."

That stayed with me. What he's saying there is, if you want to really understand the Bible, if you want to understand the life that Paul lived, then live the life that Paul lived. And then when you do, you'll understand what he's saying in his letters and what he's writing about when you go through the same kind of experiences. It's by living the life that we learn. And it's a process that never ends.

We never learn enough, and we never do enough. We can never become static in the Christian life – in our intellectual part of the Christian life and in our active part of the Christian life. And those who do, those who become static – and this is what Peter is warning against in this first chapter – they become unfruitful. Unfruitful knowledge is an unfruitful and useful life, which is a miserable life.

We were made to live to God's glory and be a blessing to one another. Peter calls such people who are unfruitful, "blind or short-sighted." In 2 Peter 1:9, "For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins."

The idea here seems to be, they are blind because they are short-sighted. He may be describing two different conditions, but I think this one condition is produced by another. In other words, the point he is making is, these people who have become static, who are unfruitful, who are not growing – they have defective spiritual vision, a defective understanding. They're like blind people.

People who are blind, or short-sighted – they walk with uncertainty. They grope along. They have to feel their way along, and they often stumble. They have no stability. And so it is spiritually. Christians can become short-sighted. They lack clear vision. They lack understanding of things.

They might see things close up, a person who is near-sighted or short-sighted can see things very close up, and these kind of people can see that. They may have some visions or some understanding of earthly things, of things that are close up. But the things that are far off, heavenly things or spiritual things – they have very little understanding of that.

They have no perspective, as a result of that, on life. And so these people live for the moment. They don't live for eternity. Now that blindness that he describes here is short-sightedness, is willful blindness. Natural blindness, physical blindness – that happens through birth or due to age. But this is brought on by a deliberate decision to neglect God's Word, and neglect prayer, neglect fellowship, neglect the things of God.

And so they lack perspective on life. They lack perspective on the future. But they also lack perspective on the past. They're described here as forgetful of the purification of their former sins. They've forgotten what kind of people they once were, what they were saved from. And as a result of that, the diminished depreciated of grace. They don't appreciate the grace of God. And that leads to carelessness in life and repeating old sins.

I think that's one reason it is very good and sanctifying to observe the Lord's Supper every week. I think we're told to do that, and I think it's very practical to do that because it reminds us that we are all sinners saved by grace, and that we're kept only by the Grace of God. We're nourished constantly by the Grace of God in Christ. We're reminded of that through the Lord's Supper. Now, I think the emphasis is on grace. We don't go back to our former sins and just think about our sins.

That's not what Peter is saying here. That's not what we should do on a Sunday night is just think about the sins from which we've been saved, and wallow in our sins, and our sense of guilt. That can be a debilitating experience. But it's thinking about the purification of sins. It's thinking about the grace that has delivered, the fundamental goodness of God for us, and that is sanctifying and has a blessing in our life. It motivates us to live an obedient life.

Failure to do that leads to a failure to grow in grace, a failure to grow in knowledge that leads to confusion, and carelessness, and loss of assurance. So in 2 Peter 1:10, Peter gives an exhortation based on the preceding verses, "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."

The word "make" here, "make certain about" – that is grammatically in the middle voice, which doesn't mean anything to you, but what it does is, it gives the sense of make for yourself. And so what it does is lay stress on our responsibility to do just what Peter says. Now what he says is not, make your calling and choosing a reality. He's not saying, "make yourself one of the elect." We can't do that. That's God's work alone.

We don't call ourselves, and as I said earlier, this is to be the irresistible call of God in the gospel, but it's His work, through the Spirit. We don't call ourselves. God does that. We don't choose ourselves. That's something that's done from all eternity. Now, having said that, people often explain election in that way. There was a gospel tract that described election as God is voting for you. The devil is voting against you. And if you break the tie by voting for yourself, then you are elected.

That's not Peter's meaning here. That's not Peter's meaning anywhere. It's nobody's meaning in the Bible. That is not Biblical. Peter, in fact, speaks of election in other places. In 1 Peter 1:1-5, he speaks of it. He calls the people to whom he writes the letter, "the chosen." And then he says they were chosen, "according to the foreknowledge of God." Now an Armenian would focus on that and say, "See, it's all foreknowledge. God looked through time, and He saw who would believe, and He chose them."

But that's not what foreknowledge means. Paul uses the same word, in Romans 8:29. He says, "... whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." Foreknew, or foreknow, or foreknowledge –

doesn't mean, as I said, God looked down through time and saw who would believe of their own free will, who would elect themselves by deciding to vote for themselves, and then chose them.

That's not what it means. Foreknowledge is in both passages. Peter's use of it and Paul's use of it means forelove. Neither Paul nor Peter says that God foreknew something about us. Paul said, "whom He foreknew" not whom He foreknew would have faith, but "whom He foreknew." We are the objects of the knowledge, which means, He loved us. That's what the word, "know" means. It's used in the Old Testament in different ways, of intellectual knowledge, but also it's used as a euphemism for intimate personal, physical love.

You see that at the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis 4:1. We read that, "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore" a son. Moses didn't mean that Adam knew something about Eve. He knew what kind of person she was. He knew this or that about her. He doesn't say that. He says he "knew" her, which means, he had relations with her, "and she conceived."

That same word is used in Amos 3:2 where God says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Now if we know that as meaning, you're the only nation and you're the only people in the world that I know something about, then we've said, God is not omniscient. He doesn't know much if He only knows something about this one nation. It's a little nation at that. But we all know He knows all about the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, and the Romans, and the Britons, and – go down through history. He knows everything about every nation.

He set the boundaries for all the nations. He created them. What it means is, you only have I chosen. You only have I set my electing love upon. You only have I known in this personal way. And here it means that as well. This situation that Peter describes in 1 Peter 1 of him being chosen is based upon foreknowledge, in the sense of, God's forelove, His eternal love. He chose us based upon that, and Peter indicates that later in 1 Peter 1:3, where he says that God, "according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again." So why are we His people, because of His mercy. Love, mercy, and grace – that's the ground and cause of election. It originates in God and not man. We can't make ourselves elect.

What we can do and what Peter certainly means for us to do, is make our election certain in our own minds. The word certain, or sure – I think the New

International Version has "sure" and the King James as well. It means it's used in confirming something, as in legally validating a will. So the idea is, validate your election. Establish the truth of it in your own mind. And we do that by growing in grace. We do that by living the life of God's elect. That's how we gain assurance of salvation.

But he doesn't say make sure of your salvation, make certain your salvation. He could have said that. He doesn't say it. What he does do is, he puts this exhortation in terms of our calling and choosing or calling and election, which lays special stress on the Grace of God. So I think that the reason he chose the wording that he chose and put the emphasis upon God's effectual calling, and his unconditional election, is for the purpose of reminding us that, for all of the effort that we must apply to living the Christian life, which he has been outlining here in these verses, for all of the emphasis that he's putting upon our human responsibility, our salvation is all of God.

He is reminding of that. From beginning to end. From eternity to eternity. Don't lose sight of the fact that it's all grace. And knowing that, understanding the Grace of God, the Sovereign Grace of God, the Electing Grace of God, the Persevering or Preserving Grace of God – that produces assurance in the believer. It's all of God from beginning to end. We can't undo His eternal decree. We didn't elect ourselves. We can't un-elect ourselves.

God doesn't change His purpose. He chose us in our fallen condition. He knew how bad we would be before He created us. He knew it was going to happen from all eternity. He knew the kind of people we would be after He chose us. He knew everything about us, from beginning to end. He still chose us. He doesn't change His mind. He can't change His mind. And that means we're absolutely secure in Him.

Even so, we are responsible to act. We are responsible to believe, and responsible in our faith to supply the virtues that Peter lists here. There is great advantage in doing that because an active, progressing Christian life results in assurance of salvation, not production of salvation, but confirmation that we have salvation. A life manifesting these qualities is one giving evidence that we possess the Divine Nature. That we are sons or daughters of God.

That promises the necessary present blessing of assurance, but it also promises future, or eschatological blessings. And that's what Peter says in the last verse in 2 Peter 1:11. "for in this way," that is, by doing the things that he's been telling us to do, "applying all diligence" these virtues, "for in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you." Now that's a future hope. He's not speaking of the present experience of salvation of coming to faith, but leaving in Christ, and entering into the Kingdom in some sense.

That's not what he's teaching. This is the goal of our lives that he is describing here. This is what we are looking forward to, someday entering into the Lord's Presence, and this is intended to be for us, a great encouragement, particularly to the weary pilgrim. And these people were that. They were struggling. They were dealing with false teachers, and if they're the same group that Peter wrote to in the first epistle, then they were dealing with physical persecution as well.

So they had conflicts from without and conflicts from within. They were, no doubt, weary pilgrims, but he's giving them this encouragement that, as they persevere, they " will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom," as the New International Version puts it. I take that to be in contrast to those who won't have such an interest, that is, those who will be saved only as one escaping through the flames, as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 3:15, they'll be saved, but they will have lived the kind of life that will not give them anything to offer to Our Lord as a show of what kind of life they lived.

But those who are diligent, those who strive for excellence in all areas of life, who are faithful to the end, will have a glorious entrance into Heaven. The image that he gives us here of this entrance into Heaven, this glorious entrance, probably goes back to the honors that were given to Olympic champions when they came home in Greece. These people would come home to great fanfare. And what the citizens of the city would do, because this champion brought great honor to their town, is that they would make a gate for him to enter.

They would knock out the wall of the city. They wouldn't decorate one of the old gates. They would make a new gate, a new entrance, into which he would enter the city, and they would bring him in with great fanfare. And that's what we can expect. That's what he's saying. You're going to enter into Heaven. You're going to enter into Christ's presence like a champion. It'll be a spectacular entrance. So do

these things. Apply all diligence in your faith. Supply moral excellence, and all of these virtues that he reminds us of here. And be diligent to make certain about your calling in this way.

Well, those who do invest in eternity – because the kingdom we enter is described here as, "the eternal kingdom." It is a world without end. It's what's coming, and it will not fade away. It will not pass away. This world, John tells us, is passing away presently. So whatever we invest in this life, and for this world, and for time – it's not going to last. What we invest in eternity lasts forever.

So Peter is encouraging us to live that way and to make that investment. And we'll do that, by God's Grace, by God's Grace only. So may God give us the grace to make this kind of diligent application in our lives, and live for what counts forever, and to live for Christ. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we do pray that you would give us the diligence to do that, the perspective to do that, the desire to do that, to live a life that pleases you and brings honor to the name of Christ. We are reminded of our responsibilities, and Peter makes it very clear that engaging in that, building up these virtues in our lives, is very profitable for us in this life and in the world to come. And yet, to see that, and appreciate that, and act upon it still takes a work of your Grace. We pray for that. Give us the desire to serve you faithfully and well. We pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.