

**Introduction:**

- A. Illus.: I saw an ESPN *30 for 30* documentary recently, entitled “What Carter Lost.” Here’s the what I read:

*There's high school football, and then there's **Texas** high school football. Oddly enough though, one of the greatest teams in state history has been lost to time... and fate. [This] is the saga of that team, the 1988 Dallas Carter Cowboys. With 21 players who were offered college scholarships and several who went on to the NFL, Carter took on the best that Texas had to offer - and managed to win it all on the field, and somehow, they threw it all away.” Six star players from good homes took up burglary as a kind of lark. They were arrested, convicted, and did time. The team’s title was revoked. Thirty years later those guys still can’t explain why they did it. Perhaps it was the Dallas police officer and Carter fan who said it best after his actions ended a string of crimes that shocked the Carter faithful to their core: “Why would you do this?”*

They had everything going for them. They withstood all sorts of adversity on and off the field. They were perhaps the best high school football team *ever!* What a tragedy!

- B. How much worse when that happens to those who profess faith in Christ?! An old spiritual says, “*Everybody talkin’ ‘bout heaven ain’t goin’ there.*” That is the overriding concern of 2 Peter. Turn to 2 Peter 1. Last week we studied **vv.3-4...** Thanks to God’s power and promises we have everything we need for a godly life. That means we can *participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption and evil desires of this world.* Nothing could be better than that! It would be beyond tragic if we threw it all away.

I. **THAT’S THE VERY REASON WE MUST MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ADD GODLY VIRTUES TO OUR FAITH (1:5-8)**

A. **Vv.5-8... Did you realize that we need to add to our faith?**

One of the bywords of the Reformation is *faith alone*.

Nothing is required of us to be saved from sin but *faith alone*. Plus nothing. Faith alone, and even that faith is the gift of God. But faith is like the gift of a garden. *Illus.:*

Years ago Susan and I bought a lovely little house in Deerfield. In the back there was a beautiful terraced flower garden. Our first year flowers began to appear. We didn’t even realize they had been planted. The garden and the flowers were a gift. But we (and by we, I mean Susan) had to work to enjoy and enhance that garden. **The gift called for effort.**

B. *“Make every effort to add to your faith...”* The idea here is to *invest*. Do everything you can to be a generous co-investor with God in your growing faith, without thinking of the price. What do we invest? Our concentrated effort to grow in these virtues.

C. All these virtues are how Christians push back against the world’s corruption and evil desires. The corrupt world, our sinful nature, and the devil all resist godly behavior. That’s why these virtues require us to *spend every effort*.

D. So these verses list seven virtues. They are not only duties, but privileges. We are *able* to practice these; able to be good and godly people because we have been given, along with our precious faith, God’s own power and promises. As I go through them evaluate yourself.

1. **Goodness.** Nine out of ten people say, “I’m a good person,” but this speaks of moral excellence. In his first letter Peter wrote in **2:11-12**, “*Dear friends, I urge you,*

*as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. **Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.***” Would your neighbors, classmates, co-workers, your social circle say, “*There’s a really good person*”? How would you evaluate yourself?

2. *Add to your goodness **knowledge**.* The Greeks loved to talk about knowledge. And false teachers often taught a kind of esoteric knowledge—the way Scientology does, for example. But Christians invest in heart knowledge of God the Father, Son and Spirit and the Scriptures. **Are you growing in knowledge in such a way that it is bolstering and beautifying your faith?**
3. *Add to you knowledge **self-control**.* This one gives me sweaty palms! We face a barrage of pleasures, some good and some evil, but sometimes it seems we have the grabby disposition of a 3-year-old. “*Mom. Mom. Mom. Can I have this? Waaaa! I want it!! Mom.*” Our faith gives strength to our weak wills, enabling us to control our desires and live for the greatest of all deferred pleasure. Your evaluation?
4. *Add to your self-control **perseverance**.* Self-control is what we need in the face of enticing pleasures. Perseverance is what we need in the face of disheartening trouble. Christian perseverance isn’t just *getting through* suffering (most people do that), but doing it in league with Jesus, resting in his comfort and care, allowing God’s strength to show through our weakness. How are you doing at this?

5. *Add to your perseverance **godliness**.* I learned something about this word this week. I'd said last week that it is *god-like-ness* but the Gr. word is more like **god-ward-ness**; the orientation of our lives. The word literally means *good worship*. An old gospel song says, "*So glad I got good religion.*" Is your reverence for God evident to others? Do you honor all that's holy, never using God's name in vain. Do you delight in worshipping with other believers?
  6. *Add to your godliness **mutual affection**.* The word here is *philadelphia*—brotherly love. I learned that this word in the Greek world this word was only used of family relationships. "*The New Testament is the only place where the word has been found outside the context of the home. A first century reader would therefore come across it here with a sense of shock; Peter really does mean that Christians should have a quality of relationships with is demonstrably different and satisfying, demanding a high and new loyalty.*" [Lukas & Green, BST, p60] Do you *love* your Christian brothers and sisters, even those who rub you the wrong way?
  7. *Add to your mutual affection **love**.* We could well insert Paul's words here from **Col 3:14**, "*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*" Love, self-sacrificing and servant-hearted, is the greatest goal and benefit of our faith. Love is what makes us like Christ. **Nothing adorns Christian faith so beautifully as love.** And nothing so ennobles a human being as expressing the love of God by the Spirit of God.
- E. So where do you need to invest more effort? *Illus.:* Years ago I was working with a student and I told him we needed

to address his weaknesses. In all seriousness, he replied, “I’d prefer you not call them weaknesses. Call them growth edges.” OK, where are your growth edges?

Remember, these qualities are natural to the Christian. We’re like child prodigies, **born again with exceptional aptitude for godly living**. But the child prodigy still has to practice. *Illus.*: Last year we had an amazing violin concert here by a child prodigy. **Masha Lakisova** was 14. She was amazing. Internationally known. Before her encore, she said, “*This number will take about two minutes but it has taken me about two years to master it.*” And then she played a piece that was like musical lightning. Prodigies practice harder, study longer, dig deeper.

**V.8** begins, “*For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure...*” ‘Possess’ is a realtor’s word. If we move in and live in these qualities we’ll avoid some terrible consequences.

## **II. IF WE’RE NOT GROWING IN THESE QUALITIES OUR FAITH IS AT SERIOUS RISK (1:8-9)**

A. **V.8**, “*For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from **being ineffective and unproductive** in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The Gr. word for *ineffective* is used in one of Jesus’ parables about vineyard workers who didn’t work. They were “*standing around, doing nothing.*” The person who *knows* Christ and doesn’t become more *like* Christ is loafing. Like that well-paid worker they catch sleeping in his truck.

Not only *ineffective* but **unproductive**, meaning they’re like a fruit tree with bare branches, like a vine with no grapes. Our faith is intended to bear fruit—like these qualities we’ve named. Jesus said such bare branches were worthless and would be thrown into the fire.

B. **V.9** continues, “*But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.*” How can someone can be both blind and nearsighted. I read this explanation. If someone who claims to be a believer doesn’t display these qualities in increasing measure they are **blind because they are evidently walking in darkness**, oblivious to the power, privileges or promises of God. James says, “*Faith without works is dead.*” Here Peter says, “*Faith without works is blind as a bat.*”

Not only are they blind, but they are **nearsighted**. I’m nearsighted. Without my glasses I couldn’t tell you who’s sitting in the third row. **Here it suggests that such a person can’t see what’s out ahead of them—like judgment.** They can’t see Jesus’ second coming or the hope of heaven. They can’t see the danger they are facing in having ineffective and unproductive faith.

Finally, Peter says, they are “**forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.**” **They can’t see where they’ve come from.** They look back and may remember a conversion experience but they can’t remember the burden of their sin or the wonder of God’s free grace. They forget how corrupt their world was. They forget how precious our God-given faith is.

C. To neglect these virtues in vv.5-8 is to live in sin. Their opposites are sinful—badness, folly, uncontrolled desires, faithlessness, irreverence, brotherly animosity and resentments, and indifference and self-centeredness instead of love. Such people can hardly be described as born again, as godly. So “*make every effort to add to your faith.*”

But, oh, what sweet benefits are promised in **vv.10-11...**

### III. GIVEN THE BENEFITS AND THE RISKS “MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CONFIRM YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION.”

- A. By investing effort in these virtues we show that our faith was the real deal, that God in fact did call and elect us. We don't convince God, of course, but growing in these qualities are evidence to ourselves and others that, in fact, we are saved. So as Lucas and Green put it, *“the acid test of the genuineness of our faith is that either we make costly life changes on the basis of it, or we treat sin and judgment as irrelevant to a Christ.”* Jesus said, *“By their fruit you will know them.”*
- B. There are two entwined benefits. The first is in **v.10**, *“For if you do these things, you will never stumble.”* That doesn't mean you'll never sin. It means you'll never fall off the road home. You won't end up in a heap by the side of the road. Sometimes I sing the doxology from Jude, *“Now to him who is **able to keep you from falling** and to present you before his glorious throne.”* Those who make their calling and election sure are guarded by Almighty God.
- C. The second benefit is in v.11, *“and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* Oh, I love that! No one enters heaven unnoticed. Illus.: You've seen on the news where some hometown kid returns from serving overseas, wounded perhaps, or shaken, and certainly weary and homesick. As they near his home people line the streets, waving and cheering. They hold signs that say “Welcome Home.” Familiar faces—so many familiar faces! And then home itself. The familiar rooms, the table heavy with welcome. The place prepared. So it will be—so it is now—for all who possess our precious faith and have worked to add to their faith the beautiful virtues of Christ.

That is our great hope. *Illus.*: Like my storybook hero, Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, who “*passed over and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*”