

Growing in Faith and Love: A New Year's Resolution Worth Making!

Brandon Phillips / General

The Church: Growing in Faith and Love / Faith; Love / 1 Peter 1:3–15

As we approach 2024 and beyond with all the possibilities, the Apostle Peter gives three litmus tests for whether your faith is true and growing.

Pre-sermon Comments

[Genesis 2:1–4](#) (LSB) ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. ² And on the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created in making *it*. ⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made earth and heaven.

[Revelation 1:20](#) (LSB) ²⁰ “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

[Philippians 3:7–8](#) (LSB) ⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ

[Philippians 3:10](#) (LSB) ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

[Philippians 3:11](#) (LSB) ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

[Philippians 3:12](#) (LSB) ¹² Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

[Philippians 3:13](#) (LSB) ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself as having laid hold of *it* yet,

but one thing I do: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,

[Philippians 3:14](#) (LSB) ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

“Paul made a break with everything in his past, both good and bad. Religious achievements, virtuous deeds, great successes in ministry, as well as sins, missed opportunities, and disasters must all be forgotten. They do not control the present or the future. Believers cannot live on past victories, nor should they be debilitated by the guilt of past sins.” ~ John MacArthur

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”

[2 Peter 3:17–18](#) (LSB) ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest you, having been carried away by the error of unprincipled men, fall from your own steadfastness, ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Sermon Text

2 Peter 1:2–7 LSB

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full 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 full 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.

2 Peter 3:17–18 LSB

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest you, having been carried away by the error of unprincipled men, fall from your own steadfastness,¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Introduction to our Text

A Sampling of Jonathan Edwards Resolutions

1. Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory, and my own good, profit and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriad's of ages hence. Resolved to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved to do this, whatever difficulties I meet with, how many and how great soever.
2. Resolved, to be continually endeavoring to find out some new invention and contrivance to promote the aforementioned things.
3. Resolved, if ever I shall fall and grow dull, so as to neglect to keep any part of these Resolutions, to repent of all I can remember, when I come to myself again.
4. Resolved, never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God; nor be, nor suffer it, if I can avoid it.
6. Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.
22. Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can, with all the power; might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of.

62. Resolved, never to do anything but duty; and then according to [Eph. 6:6-8](#), do it willingly and cheerfully as unto the Lord, and not to man; “knowing that whatever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord.” *June 25 and July 13, 1723.*

Proposition and Outline

As we approach 2024 and beyond with all the possibilities, the Apostle Peter gives three litmus tests for whether your faith is true and growing. You must have:

1. A Faith that Advances in Knowledge ([2 Pet 1:2-4](#))
2. A Faith that Abounds in Love ([2 Pet 1:5-11](#))
3. A Faith that Affirms God’s Grace ([2 Pet 3:17-18](#))

The Author of 2 Peter

Simon Peter

[2 Peter 1:1](#) (NASB95) 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:

Peter’s background

[John 1:40–42](#) (LSB) ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John *speak* and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means Christ). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus. When Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

[Matthew 16:22–23](#) (LSB) ²² And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

[Matthew 26:40](#) (LSB) ⁴⁰ And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour?”

[Matthew 26:34](#) (LSB) ³⁴ Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

[Mark 14:70-72](#) (LSB) ⁷⁰ But again he was denying it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, “Surely you are *one* of them, for you are also a Galilean.” ⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man you are talking about!” ⁷² And immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said the statement to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And throwing himself down, he began to cry.

[John 18:10-11](#) (LSB) ¹⁰ Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”

[Luke 22:50-51](#) (LSB) ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus answered and said, “Stop! No more of this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.

[Matthew 16:24-25](#) (LSB) ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Peter’s Pity Party

[John 20:1](#) (LSB) ¹ Now on the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb.

[John 20:16](#) (LSB) ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher).

[Luke 24:34](#) (LSB) ³⁴ who were saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”

Peter’s Lowest Point

[John 21:3–7](#) (LSB) ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will also come with you.” They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ So Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered Him, “No.” ⁶ And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find *some*.” So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped *for work*), and cast himself into the sea.

[Matthew 28:7](#) (LSB) ⁷ “And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

[Matthew 16:16](#) (LSB) ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

[Matthew 16:17](#) (LSB) ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon **Bar-Jonah**, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

[Matthew 16:13–15](#) (LSB) ¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

[Matthew 16:18–19](#) (LSB) ¹⁸ “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on

earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

[Jonah 1:2-3](#) (LSB) ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before Me.” ³ Yet Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, and paid its fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh.

[Jonah 1:4](#) (LSB) ⁴ But Yahweh hurled a great wind on the sea, and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship gave thought to breaking apart.

[Jonah 1:12](#) (LSB) ¹² So he said to them, “Lift me up and hurl me into the sea. Then the sea will become quiet for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm *has come* upon you.”

[Jonah 1:15](#) (LSB) ¹⁵ So they lifted Jonah up and hurled him into the sea, and the sea stood still from its raging.

[Jonah 2:2](#) (LSB) ² and he said, “I called out of my distress to Yahweh, And He answered me. I cried for help from the belly of Sheol; You heard my voice.

[John 21:15-17](#) (LSB) ¹⁵ So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.

[Matthew 16:19](#) (LSB) ¹⁹ “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Peter takes his stand

[Acts 2:14–16](#) (LSB) ¹⁴ But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. ¹⁵ “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

[Jonah 4:2](#) (LSB) ² And he prayed to Yahweh and said, “Ah! O Yahweh, was not this my word *to myself* while I was still in my *own* land? Therefore I went ahead to flee to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning evil.

[Acts 10:5–6](#) (LSB) ⁵ “Now send *some* men to Joppa and summon a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; ⁶ he is lodging with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea.”

Conclusion - The Significance

[Philippians 3:13–14](#) (LSB) ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself as having laid hold of *it* yet, but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Additional Quotes

Quotes about Faith

Faith is both God’s gift and man’s act. The Lord is the author of our faith, but we ourselves believe. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Obedience is the hallmark of faith. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Get the queen bee of faith and all the other virtues will attend her. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Faith is the silver thread upon which the pearls of the graces are strung. ~
Charles Spurgeon

Faith is the accepting of what God gives. Faith is the believing what God says.
Faith is the trusting to what Jesus has done. Only do this and you are saved, as
surely as you are alive! ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

It is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the strength of Him upon
whom you rely! Christ is able to save you if you come to Him—be your faith
weak or be it strong. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Walking by sight is just this: “I believe in myself.” Whereas walking by faith is: “I
believe in God.” ~ Charles Spurgeon

*Faith cannot stand unless it be founded on the promises of God. ~ **John
Calvin**

Faith is nothing but believing what God promises or says. Whatever
remarkable thing we read of happening in the Old or New Testament, we read
that it was done by faith—not by works, not by a general faith, but by faith
directed to the matter in hand. ~ **Martin Luther**

The property of faith is not to be proud of what the eye sees, but to rely on
what the Word reveals. ~ **Martin Luther**

It is never on account of its formal nature as a psychic act that faith is
conceived in Scripture to be saving. It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in
Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith. The saving power resides
exclusively, not in the act of faith or the attitude of faith or nature of faith, but
in the object of faith. ~ **Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield**

Faith in God is a terrific venture in the dark. ~ **Oswald Chambers**

Faith that is sure of itself is not faith; faith that is sure of God is the only faith
there is. ~ **Oswald Chambers**

Faith does not struggle; faith lets God do it all. ~ **Corrie ten Boom**

Faith is to believe what you do not yet see; the reward for this faith is to see what you believe. ~ **Augustine of Hippo**

Faith is not in itself a meritorious act; the merit is in the One toward Whom it is directed. Faith is a redirecting of our sight, a getting out of the focus of our own vision and getting God into focus. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

In natural matters faith follows evidence and is impossible without it, but in the reality of the spirit, faith precedes understanding; it does not follow it. The natural man must know in order to believe; the spiritual man must believe in order to know. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

Every man lives by faith, the non-believer as well as the saint; the one by faith in natural laws and the other by faith in God. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

The man that believes will obey; failure to obey is convincing proof that there is not true faith present. To attempt the impossible God must give faith or there will be none, and He gives faith to the obedient heart only. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

Faith says, "I cannot believe that he who has brought me so far is going to let me down at this point. It is impossible; it would be inconsistent with the character of God." ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

Faith always shows itself in the whole personality. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not our righteousness; our faith does not constitute our righteousness. Faith is simply the instrument by which we receive the righteousness. Or, again, take it like this: our faith does not justify us. If you begin to speak like that, you see, you turn faith at once into works. You say, Ah, I am justified because of my faith; it was my faith that did it; and immediately you have got something to boast of. The other man had not got faith, and I had faith, my faith has saved me. At once you are contradicting [Romans 1:17](#). Our faith does not justify us. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that justifies—and nothing else! ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

The trials burn away any impurities in the believer's faith. What is left when the trials have ended is purified, genuine faith, analogous to the pure gold or silver that emerges from the refiner's fire. ~ **Wayne Grudem**

Faith is the sight of the inward eye. ~ **Alexander Maclaren**

Quotes about Knowledge

Observe, then, that all other knowledge may be useful enough in itself, but if it does not concern Christ, it cannot be called saving knowledge. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

You know something of Him. Oh, may God give the Grace to add to your knowledge, trust, and then shall you have true saving faith! ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

The usual rule is that the more we really know the more conscious we are of the littleness of our knowledge. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

The knowledge of God is the great hope of sinners. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

* Jesus taught that true knowledge begins with spiritual knowledge, knowledge of God, and that this is to be found in God's revelation of himself in the Bible and in Jesus' own life and work, the work of the Savior. ~ **James Montgomery Boice**

Ignorance is your disease; knowledge must be your cure. ~ **Richard Baxter**

Knowledge without humility is vanity. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

To know God is at once the easiest and the most difficult thing in the world. It is easy because the knowledge is not won by hard mental toil, but is something freely given. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

* Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls. ~ **Jonathan Edwards**

All true knowledge of God is born out of obedience. ~ **John Calvin**

We must observe that the knowledge of God which we are invited to cultivate is not that which, resting satisfied with empty speculation, only flutters in the brain, but a knowledge which will prove substantial and fruitful whenever it is duly perceived and rooted in the heart. ~ **John Calvin**

Having the knowledge of God's Word control our minds is the key to righteous living. What controls your thoughts will control your behavior. Self-control is a result of mind-control, which is dependent on knowledge. ~ **John F.**

MacArthur

Some Corinthian believers assumed that knowledge was the true sign of spirituality. They did not understand that knowledge without love indicates a lack of knowledge. ~ **John D. Barry; Douglas Mangum; Derek R. Brown; Michael S. Heiser; Miles Custis; Elliot Ritzema; Matthew M. Whitehead; Michael Grigoni; David Bomar**

Knowledge is happiness, because to have knowledge—broad, deep knowledge—is to know true ends from false, and lofty things from low. ~ **Helen Keller**

Nothing but the pure knowledge of God can teach us humility. ~ **John Calvin**

When we obey His Word, we grow in spiritual knowledge; and as we grow in spiritual knowledge, we grow in freedom from sin. Life leads to learning, and learning leads to liberty. ~ **Warren W. Wiersbe**

The true knowledge of God will result, not in our being puffed up with conceit at how knowledgeable we are, but in our falling on our faces before God in sheer wonder and crying, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how unscrutable his ways!" Whenever our knowledge becomes dry or leaves us cold, something has gone wrong. ~ **John Stott**

Next time:

You must have a Faith that [Advances in Knowledge \(2 Peter 1:2-4\)](#)

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[2 Peter 3:17-18](#) (LSB) ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest you, having been carried away by the error of unprincipled men, fall from your own steadfastness, ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.