

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

[Philippians 4:6–7](#) (LSB) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[Matthew 10:16](#) (LSB) “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

[Matthew 16:18](#) (LSB) “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.

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.

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](#)) [Review]
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](#))

Review

The Author of 2 Peter

[Luke 22:61-62](#) (LSB) ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.” ⁶² And he went out and cried bitterly.

[Acts 2:14](#) (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.

[Acts 10:25-28](#) (LSB) ²⁵ And when Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*. ²⁶ But Peter raised him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am *just* a man.” ²⁷ As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. ²⁸ And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man defiled or unclean.

[Ephesians 2:10](#) (LSB) ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The Audience of 2 Peter

[2 Peter 3:1](#) (LSB) ¹ This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,

[1 Peter 1:1-2](#) (LSB) ¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **To** those who reside as exiles, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to the obedience of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of His blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

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

[2 Peter 1:2](#) (LSB) ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

[2 Peter 1:2](#) (LSB) ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

[2 Peter 1:3](#) (LSB) 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.

[Ephesians 1:3](#) (LSB) ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

[Ephesians 1:13-14](#) (LSB) ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

[Ephesians 1:16-20](#) (LSB) ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ so that you—the eyes of your heart having been enlightened—will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing

greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of the might of His strength,²⁰ which He worked in Christ, by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

[2 Peter 1:4](#) (LSB) 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.

[Romans 8:38–39](#) (LSB) ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ 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.

[1 John 4:18](#) (LSB) ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

You must have a Faith that [Abounds in Love \(2 Peter 1:5-7\)](#)

[2 Peter 1:5](#) (LSB) ⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

We've been given everything! What more do we need to do?

Perhaps the greatest gift that Greece, and especially Athens, gave to the world was the plays and dramatic works of men like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, which are still among its most cherished possessions. All these plays needed large choruses and were, therefore, very expensive to produce. In the great days of Athens, there were public-spirited citizens who voluntarily took on the duty, at their own expense, of collecting, maintaining, training and equipping such choruses. It was at the major religious festivals that these plays were produced. For instance, at the city Dionysia, three tragedies, five comedies and five wild and riotous choruses were produced. Men had to be found to provide the choruses for them all, a duty which could cost as much as 3,000 drachmae. The men who undertook these duties out of their own pocket

and out of love for their city were called chorēgoi, and chorēgein was the verb used for undertaking such a duty. ~ William Barclay

The foundation is our faith in Christ!

[2 Peter 1:5](#) (LSB) ⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

Our faith will abound in love when we supply Moral Excellence!

[2 Peter 1:5](#) (ESV) ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,

God is a hope of courage (aretē), not an excuse for cowardice. ~ Plutarch

Faith must lead not to the retreat and seclusion of the cloister and the hermit's cell, but to a life effective in the service of God and other people; and it must produce the courage always to show whose life it is and whom it serves. ~ William Barclay

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

[1 Corinthians 11:1](#) (LSB) ¹ Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

[1 Thessalonians 4:1](#) (LSB) ¹ Finally then, brothers, we ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

Our faith will abound in love when we supply Knowledge!

[2 Peter 1:5](#) (LSB) ⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

This knowledge [gnosis] which enables people to decide to take the right course and to act honourably and efficiently in the day-today circumstances of life. So, to faith must be added courage and effectiveness; to courage and effectiveness must be added the practical wisdom to deal with life. ~ William Barclay

Our faith will abound in love when we supply Self-Control!

[2 Peter 1:6](#) (LSB) ⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

Aristotle distinguishes four states in life. There is [a state] in which passion has been put entirely under the control of reason; we might call it perfect self-discipline. There is [another state] which is the precise opposite; it is the state in which reason is entirely suppressed by passion; we might call it unrestrained lust. In between these two states, there is [another state], in which reason fights but passion prevails; we might call it lack of self-restraint. There is [this particular state], in which reason fights against passion and prevails; we call it self-control.

[Self-Control] does not contemplate a situation in which a person is stripped of all passion; it envisages a situation in which passions remain, but are under perfect control and so become servants, not tyrants. ~ William Barclay

Our faith will abound in love when we supply Perseverance!

[2 Peter 1:6](#) (LSB) ⁶ and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

[2 Peter 1:6](#) (HCSB) ⁶ knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness,

[2 Peter 1:6](#) (ESV) ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,

Didymus of Alexandria, writing in the third century on the attitude of Job, says: 'It is not that the righteous man must be without feeling, although he must patiently bear the things which afflict him; but it is true virtue when a man deeply feels the things he toils against, but nevertheless despises sorrows for the sake of God.'

Michael Green has said, "The Christianity of such a man is like the steady burning of a star rather than the ephemeral brilliance and speedy eclipse of a meteor."

Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face. ~ Mike Tyson

Chrysostom calls perseverance, “the queen of virtues, the foundation of right actions, peace in war, calm in tempest, security in plots, and neither the violence of man nor the powers of the evil one can injure it. It is the quality which keeps a man on his feet with his face to the wind. It is the virtue which can transmute the hardest trial into glory, because beyond the pain it sees the goal

Our faith will abound in love when we supply Godliness!

[2 Peter 1:6](#) (LSB) ⁶ and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

[Psalm 16:8](#) (LSB) ⁸ I have set Yahweh continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

[1 Timothy 4:8](#) (LSB) ⁸ for bodily training is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.

True Christians pursue practical awareness of God in every detail of life. They are characterized by deep reverence for God, which leads to courageous, steadfast, joyful, self-control under temptation, built on spiritual discernment in the pursuit of moral excellence. It’s a marvelous fabric woven here. ~ John MacArthur

Godliness (eusebeia) is the nearest Greek word for religion; and, when we begin to define it, we see the intensely practical character of the Christian religion. When people become Christians, they acknowledge a double duty, to God and to their neighbours.

Our faith will abound in love when we supply Brotherly Kindness!

[2 Peter 1:7](#) (LSB) ⁷ and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

How can he who has to teach mankind run to get something in which to heat the water to give the baby his bath?’ ~ Epictetus

[1 John 4:20](#) (LSB) 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.

[Matthew 22:36-40](#) (LSB) ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, ““YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.” ³⁸ “This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ “And the second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ ⁴⁰ “On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Our faith will abound in love when we supply Sacrificial Love!

[2 Peter 1:7](#) (LSB) ⁷ and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

This is the highest and purest and noblest love, which will then be reflected in kindness to other Christians, rising out of a deep reverence for our beloved God, leading to a courageous, steadfast, joyful, self-control under temptation, built on spiritual discernment and the consuming compelling pursuit to be like Christ. It’s just a big circle. And faith is the foundation for the whole thing, and love is the culmination. ~ John MacArthur

You must have a Faith that Affirms God’s Grace ([2 Peter 3:17-18](#))

[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.

[Philippians 1:6](#) (LSB) ⁶ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of 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: