

May 2009

Listen To The Chorus

G. Possessing And Developing The Seven Virtues. v.8

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:8 ταυτα γαρ υμιν υπαρχοντα και πλεοναζοντα ουκ αργους ουδε ακαρπους καθιστησιν εις την του κυριου ημων ιησου χριστου επιγνωσιν

“For if these things be in you”, *tauta, these*, refers back to the seven virtues of the chorus that God supplies to every believer in Christ in addition to their faith in Christ: goodness, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

Huparcho refers to what is at one's disposal, or to their possessions or property. What this tells us is that they are! God has supplied everything we need for our physical life here on earth and the operation of our spiritual life, *eusebeia*. But we must utilize, or apply to the situation, the various seven members of the chorus, if we are to keep away from soul sins and fail to partake of the divine nature.

The word for abound is *pleonazo* and it meant to be greater in quantity, to have more and more of something, such as, to have more money, or more children, more cars, property, etc.. Here it's to have these virtues in greater usage and influence on our lives. Which tells us that the believer never arrives at the place in their Christian growth where they can stop. There will always be that aspect of continuing to grow in grace, in knowledge, and in the utilization of the virtues God has given to us.

The present active participle of *huparcho* tells us that this is about our volitional responsibility to start utilizing what God has given to us and that it's to become a way of life for us. We are not to revert back to our old ways of living in the flesh and following the ways of the world, but to keep on advancing and living in the spiritual life dynamic.

God has given us these seven concepts that he not only wants us to live by, but to keep developing them where they **become** our lives:

One, mastery, the spiritual ability to master the details of life and go on to master the various concepts of the spiritual life dynamic, if we will live in the new man and not the flesh nature.

Two, knowledge, to sit under the teaching of his Word, and make it our priority in life. But we will need to make the decision to go for it and have the follow through.

Three, self control, the ability to control ourselves so that we will live life in the Holy Spirit and the new nature and not live according to the sins and human good of the flesh nature.

Four, perseverance, is having that inner trait developed by the Word of God, where one utilizes the spiritual life to endure the trials of life and keep moving forward in the plan of God.

Five, godliness, is metabolizing the Word of God by faith, under the filling of the Holy Spirit, so that you can live life in your own spiritual life created in you by God.

Six, is having an impersonal love for all believers in Christ based upon your own virtue, not theirs.

Seven, love, is having an impersonal love for all nonbelievers, once again, based upon your own virtue, not theirs.

Now Peter says that if we do this, then, “*they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The word used for barren is *argos* and it meant to be unemployed, idle, nothing to do, lazy, not doing any good, not producing the desired effect. When God created the divine nature in us, and gave us every spiritual provision to implement it, it was toward the idea of having impact on life and the angelic conflict. But *argos* says that the believer who doesn't listen to the seven virtues won't.

Unfruitful is the word *akarpos* and it looked at fruit trees that aren't producing any fruit. For the believer in Christ it refers to him not producing any divine good in this life. So what we have is a believer who isn't having any impact in this life for God and who isn't bearing any spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Christian life is not produced by the flesh, but by living life in the filling of the Holy Spirit and applying the teachings of God's Word to our everyday life.

The word *kathistemi*, “they make you that”, has the idea of making someone or causing someone to become something, to put or place someone in a certain position or state. The idea here is not being ineffective and unfruitful in the Christian life, so it's saying that the utilizing of the seven virtues, in addition to our faith, will put us in the position where we won't be ineffective or unfruitful.

Both verbs to possess and abound, which, as we have seen, tells us first of all that we need to have these seven virtues operating in our Christian life and be abounding in them, are in the present participle. They make you that is in the present indicative. Now the action of the present participle occurs at the same time as the action of the main verb, so what we have is the idea of as long as we possess these qualities, (provided to us by God), and are growing in them, then we will never be ineffective in the angelic conflict nor unfruitful in the Christian life.

Mastering of the details of life, extricating yourself from the entanglements of the world system, learning to get your priorities right so that the Word of God becomes first in your life, getting Bible Doctrine from a Pastor-Teacher in a local church, placing yourself and your family under the authority structure of God, curbing one's old sin nature activities, living by faith, walking in the filling of the Holy Spirit, claiming the promises of God by faith, metabolizing the Word of God by faith, applying the teaching of the Word of God to your life, sticking with Bible Doctrine and God's will for your life, keep moving forward by faith in life, having a relaxed spiritual mental attitude toward all believers in Christ, and having a relaxed spiritual mental attitude toward all unbelievers will put us in a place where we will be neither ineffective in the angelic conflict, nor unproductive in our spiritual life.

But that's not the only thing! By possessing these seven virtues and abounding in them, and remember the Lord not only provides our faith but these concepts as well, the result of all that will be having an *epignosis* knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ!

It is the world system, the flesh nature and the devil that keeps us from knowing Jesus Christ and having Christ formed in us. To have the *epignosis* knowledge of Jesus Christ takes the teaching of Bible Doctrine that we have metabolized by faith, that's what makes *epignosis* knowledge different than just factual knowledge.

But it is the flesh, with its reactor factors, its emotions and its lusts that keep us from entering into the spiritual dynamic of the divine nature. But by utilizing the seven virtues that God has supplied, we will be able to rise above all that by avoiding the problems of the flesh, with the result that we can partake in the new nature that God has created in every true believer in Christ.

H. Forgetting One Is Saved. v.9

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” 2 Peter 1:9 ω γαρ μη παρεστιν ταυτα τυφλος εστιν μυωπαζων ληθην λαβων του καθαρισμου των παλαι αυτου αμαρτιων

The KJV has translated *pareimi* as he that *lacketh* these things. Now the word *pareimi* meant to be present; it had the idea of being there. *These things* refers back to the seven members of the chorus, or the seven spiritual virtues that God supplies us, so what it's saying is that **if these things are not present in the believer's soul,** then we are blind, etc.

In the original we have the word *blind*, *tuphlos*, first in the passage followed by the word *muopazo*, the word for being near-sighted. The present indicative of *eimi*, the verb of status quo is used with being blind, *he is blind*, followed by the present participle of being near-sighted, or as we sometimes use the expression of being short-sighted.

The **first** expression is for shock, the **second** one is for clarity and accuracy. How we would express this is he's blind, well not actually blind, but near-sighted. Two ideas are in view here, those things that are **afar off**, and those things that are **up close**. The things that are **afar off** are the spiritual things that pertain to eternity and the eternal state. The things that are **up close** are the things that pertain to the flesh and temporal life on this earth.

What it's telling is that the believer in Christ, who does not possess these seven spiritual virtues and is abounding in them, is basically spiritually blind to the things of eternity, because the only things that he is able to see are the things of this life! **He is extremely short-sighted**. We even use this expression when talking about people who make bad decisions in order to have immediate gratification of their lusts, but prove detrimental in the long run. They squander their inheritance, instead of getting an education. They buy an expensive car, instead of investing their money. They're *short-sighted*.

Metaphorically *tuphlos* refers to a dulling of the intellect. He isn't thinking along the lines of divine viewpoint and he's not able to because his mind has been dulled by scar tissue in the soul! When the believer lives outside of the spiritual life dynamic of Bible Doctrine, the faith rest life and the filling of the Holy Spirit, he begins to develop a condition of *porosis* on the soul. *Porosis* being similar to barnacles on the hull of a ship, or tartar on the teeth. It's a layering of calcification on the soul where the believer is no longer tuned into the spiritual life concept. He now is only interested in short term concepts of the world and the flesh and not the things which have eternal values.

The idea that Peter is getting at is qualitative. “But if anyone does not have these qualities, he is blind! ... Near-sighted would be more appropriate, because he can only see the things up close (this life), but not the things afar off, (eternal life)”. Time is put in the metaphor of distance. Something that is going to happen in the future is looked at as way down the road. While something that is going to happen very soon is only a short distance away.

We see Abraham who indeed was far-sighted because he was looking for the city of God. “*For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*” Hebrews 11:9 And for all believers in Christ who have their eyes set on eternity. “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, **but having seen them afar off**, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*” Hebrews 13:13

Peter says, “*and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*” ληθην λαβων του καθαρισμου των παλαι αυτου αμαρτιων. What's interesting here is that Peter doesn't use the normal word *lanthano* for *to forget*, but uses the older form of *lanthano*, lethe, which gets into the world of the mystery religions centering around the realm of *Hades*.

We have lethen labon, *labon* being the orist active participle of *lanthano*, which meant to take, to grasp, to receive. Now the KJV translators have rendered it as, *hath forgotten*, but *lethe* actually referred to the *Lethe* river, one of the five rivers down in *Hades* according to Greek mythology. So what we have is, “*Having taken [a drink of water from] the river Lethe, thus forgetting that he was cleansed from his past sins.*”

We notice that Peter continues to borrow from not only the Greek stage and the Greek tragedies, but he now is also using concepts found in the Greek mystery religions as the background for doctrine. By the way, the words *Paradise* and *Hades* are also found, first of all, in the background of the Greek mystery schools. Now this is not an endorsement of their theology, but are used as a means of communicating doctrinal concepts pertaining to the Christian life.

We must remember that the people he was ministering to were well familiar with the mystery religion concepts, having grown up in them as their culture. And they serve not only as a good back drop for understanding, but there is a parallelism that can be used to explain Christian concepts. And by using the word, *Lethe*, they would understand its significance.

The mystery religions taught that in *Hades* there were five rivers, some say six. The river Styx, which was the river of **hate**. The river Phlegton, the river of **fire**. The river Acheron, the river of **woe**. The river Cocytus, the river of **wailing and lamentation**. And the river Lethe, the river of **forgetting**. By drinking from the water of these five rivers, except perhaps Phlegton, that encircled *Hades* one would experience the concept that was associated with them.

It was said that as the departed souls of this life journeyed down to *Hades* at death they had to have a coin, which was to be placed in the mouth or on the eyes at death, with which to pay the ferryman, Charon, who would transport them by boat across the river Styx. If they didn't have the coin, then they had to wander for one hundred years until they could find the pauper's boat to go across.

When they arrived at the river *Lethe* they were to drink from its waters. When they did, that caused them to forget all life that they had experienced on the surface of the earth. So drinking from the waters of the river *Lethe* referred to forgetting what had happened to you before. So what Peter is saying is that “they had drunk from the waters of *Lethe*” and had forgotten that they had ever been saved!”

Now some mystery religions believed that there also was a concept of reincarnation, which the Bible clearly does not teach, but this is also a part of the background of the word *lethe*. Under **their**, (not ours), mystery religion concept, the souls that were going to be reincarnated into this life had to drink once again from the river *Lethe* so they could forget their past life in *Hades*.

Another concept connected to *Lethe* is that the Gnostics believed that all souls had come from one universal soul, which they called *god*; having come to earth in a time predating the flood. They describe this epoch of history as wonderfully Edenic in every respect. Those that came to this earth were *gods* from all over the universe and life flourished on earth for them wonderfully so at the beginning. But as time went by these *gods* became so preoccupied with life on this earth that they had forgotten who they were and where they came from.

There was another school of thought on this subject and that is these *gods*, who were a part of the universal soul, were banished to the earth and **their punishment was to have completely forgotten who they were and where they came from.** But through the initiation levels of the mystery religion the devotees would become aware of their life prior to coming to earth.

There were also some mystery schools that taught there was a sixth river, the river Mnemosune, which was the river of **remembrance**. And that some devotees down in *Hades* were given a choice of either drinking from the river *Lethe* or from the river Mnemosune. If they drank from the waters of *Lethe*, then they forgot everything down there. But if they drank from the waters of Mnemosune, then they remembered everything and became omniscient.

So why does Peter use such a word for the idea of forgetting? It's because *lethe* has such a strong background for the concept. For us to use the word forget we might have the connotation of a sketchy memory; one that could be brought back by various means. **But by using the word *lethe* it tells us that they had completely and totally lost all knowledge of their salvation!**

Now what had they forgotten? They had forgotten “*that he was purged from his old sins*”. By the believer not continuing his life of trust in the Father and faith in his Word, and by not utilizing the seven virtues that God has given to him in grace, the believer can get to the place that he can completely forget that he was ever saved at all!

An interesting note on the River Phlegethon is that it was called the river of fire, sometimes the lake of fire. It was said to have been a stream of fire that coils around the earth, and eventually ends up in *Tartarus*, where God imprisoned the angels who sinned against him before the flood. It is this river of fire that surrounds Tartarus and prevents the imprisoned chained spirits from leaving.

The Greek mysteries believed that the souls who go to a good life after death will end up in a place called Elysium, a place where soft breezes continually blow, with wonderful things in store for the departed. But before they can cross over into Elysium, they must drink a cup of water from the River *Lethe* which will make them completely forget the earthly life that they had previously lived.

The use of the word *lethe* for forgetting is the stronger word because it brings out and emphasizes the idea of one completely forgetting the life that one had lived before. The parallel is that these were believers in Christ, that is not in question, and they had been living the Christian life, but now, due to their neglecting the seven virtues, they had completely forgotten their past Christian way of life that they had once been living.

They, like the *gods* of some mystery schools, had become so preoccupied with the things of this life found here on earth, and their own earthly fleshly existence, they had neglected the seven concepts of doctrine mentioned in the passage and had come to the place that their memory of their faith in Christ, eternal salvation, and their ultimate destiny of heaven, was wiped from their memories!

Lethe is the root for the word lethargic which denotes the quality or state of being drowsy and dull, listless and unenergetic, or indifferent and lazy; apathetic or sluggish inactivity. Which defines the attitude of some believers toward the Word of God, and their preoccupation with the flesh and the world system, resulting in them coming to the place of **forgetting that they had been cleansed of their sins.** But we can avoid this by putting ourselves out to utilize the seven virtues God gave us.

I. Assurance Of Salvation. v.10

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:” 2 Peter 1:10 διο μαλλον αδελφοι σπουδασατε βεβαιαν υμων την κλησιν και εκλογην ποιεισθαι ταυτα γαρ ποιουντες ου μη πταισητε ποτε

By the use of, “Wherefore the rather, brethren,” *διο mallon*, Peter is not only addressing this to believers in Christ, but he's giving us a contrast between success and failure in the Christian life, which becomes an option for all believers, so that we don't end up like Agamemnon or any other character of a Greek tragedy, but to go on and be the heroes that God wants us to be.

He begins this with a command of the same word that we had in verse five, *spoudazo*. *Spoudazo* meant to put oneself out to accomplish a goal or an objective, to be highly motivated. Which tells us that the believer in Christ is to be highly motivated to go on with the things of Christ and to put the Word of God and its application as first priority in their life.

Because this is found in the arist imperative, it tells us that they weren't presently doing it, hence the command to start! When one isn't doing the right thing in their life, they need something to get them started and that's where a command comes in. And by obeying the command of the Apostle they start doing the right thing and are now on the right track. And by continuing to do the right thing, then it becomes a practice in their life and they're now staying on the right track.

By possessing and utilizing the seven virtues will make our calling and election sure, *bebaian humon ten klesin kai eklogen*. These seven virtues aren't our salvation. They proceed from our salvation and are to accompany our salvation to serve as an assurance that we have salvation!

The word for *sure* is *bebaias* and has been rendered as sure, confirm, established, steadfast and secure. It had the idea that something was firm and secure because it had been solidly grounded, such as a house that was firmly grounded to a solid foundation. But there was another use of *bebaias* and that was in the world of commerce dealing with buying and selling.

In those days when you sold something to someone, such as a horse or anything else, in the transaction there was an exchange of money to the seller and the horse to the buyer. The buyer walks off happy with his horse and the seller is happy with his money. But what would happen a couple of days later if the seller, or his relatives, or somebody else claimed that you didn't buy the horse, but **stole** it? Now you have a serious problem.

So to avoid that potential problem the buyer would require that the seller give him a *bebaiosis*, a legally valid confirmation of the sale. So now the buyer not only has the property, but a legal document that would stand up in court affirming that it was his property. This document, which is like our Bill of Sale today, was the buyer's guarantee that he was the legal owner of the horse, which made the sale not only legally solid, but **also gave him an inner assurance**.

So what this is telling us is that if we possess these seven doctrinal qualities, and are abounding in them, then we will not fall in the Christian life, but will have the inner assurance that we are saved and are on our way to heaven! This is certainly a far cry from having no assurance at all concerning one's salvation. The question being is which state of mind do we want to be in, assurance that we're saved or no assurance, when we exit this life at death?

Our *calling and election* looks at two of the aspects of our salvation. The Apostle Paul covers this subject in Romans 8:28-30, “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the **called** according to his **purpose**. For whom he did **foreknow**, he also did **predestinate** to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*”

And it all began with the eternal purpose of the Father to give a people to his Son, “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” John 6:37. These people that the Father gives to his Son would be conformed to the image of his Son. These people he *foreknew*, *proginosko*, and he *predestined* or *predetermined*, *proorizo*, which meant to determine something beforehand, that they would be made like his Son. What God knew beforehand and what he determined beforehand is from the result of what he chose beforehand.

Now Peter wrote in verse eight, “*For if these things be **in** you, and **abound**,*” talking about our, **one**, mastering of the details of life, **two**, getting under the teaching of the Word of God from a local church, **three**, curbing our old sin nature activity of the flesh nature, **four**, perseverance in sticking with the will of God for our lives, **five**, living in the sphere of our own spiritual life dynamic by being filled and applying the Word to our life, **six**, having virtue love for unbelievers and **seven**, virtue love for believers, that if we possess these seven qualities in addition to our faith, and are abounding in them, then we will have that inner assurance that we are saved and will be with God forever.

Now we want to note that these qualities aren't our salvation, but give to us the assurance of our salvation! Just like the *bebaiosis* that one got with the purchase of the horse, the *bebaiosis* wasn't the horse, but the guarantee or legal assurance that the horse was his!

“*For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*”. But the *bebaiosis*, which in our case is the seven virtues brought out by the Apostle Peter, is not just our inner assurance of our salvation, but also the thing that will keep us on track in the Christian life and keep us from falling.

If you do these things is in the present active participle of *poieo*, which tells us that the believer in Christ is responsible, by the use of the active voice, for utilizing these things that God has supplied to us all and that, by the use of the participial form, they are to become a way of life for us all.

What's interesting here, and certainly a great encouragement, is the use of the double negative of *ou me* with the verb to *fall*. The *double negative*, *ou me*, is an emphatic negative, which tells us that if we're doing these things and are abounding in them, then absolutely **we will never fall** in our Christian walk! And with *pote* at the end following a negative it's to be rendered, “not ever”! “**For if you are constantly doing these things as your way of life, you will emphatically never fall, not ever!**”

To *fall*, or to *stumble*, goes back to the metaphor of being blind. One who is blind cannot see what lies before him in the path. Something that he couldn't *see* could cause him to stumble and fall down and hurt himself. Which, in itself, is a metaphor for *falling into sin*. Or, because he was blind, he could go down the wrong path in life. *Going down the wrong path* is also a *metaphor* for wandering away from the Christian life and going off into the world system, as so many Christians have done. But all this can be avoided for the believer in Christ, if they live by the seven concepts that God has supplied to us in his grace, as mentioned here in the passage. **All of which are designed to keep us in that place of harmonious rapport with God.**

J. A Lavish Entrance Into Heaven. v.11

“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:11 “And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (NIV) οὕτως γὰρ πλουσιῶς ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται ὑμῖν ἡ εἰσοδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ

We had seen that in so doing, or as it is in verse ten, “if ye do these things”, which referred back to applying and living by the seven virtues, that the believer would be productive in life, that he would have impact for Christ in the angelic conflict, that he would have assurance of his salvation, that he would never fall or stumble in his Christian life, and now we see that he will have a rich welcome into Christ's eternal kingdom!

“An entrance shall be ministered” is the future passive indicative of *epichoregeo*. As we had seen, the *epichoregia*, the patron, was the one who supported the stage with money, gifts, endorsement, or work. The patron in those days, the *epichoregia*, was the one who provided the funding for the stage, the set, the props and even providing the salary for the actors to live on. So the verb form looks at the concept of what has been, or will be in this case, supplied to us by the *Epichoregia*, who is God the Father. But now the Father, our *Epichoregia*, after supplying to us all we need in this life to be winners, to be the heroes of our own play, will be supplying to us a lavish entrance into heaven.

The stage, the set, the props for the play, the financial support for the actors, everything needed to put on the play was provided, *epichoregeo*, by the *Epichorgia*. But there was, and still is, a vast difference on how lavish a stage production was provided. A “bare bones” production would be provided for the newcomer, the amateur, or the “not so famous”. But for the skilled, the seasoned, the famous actors, a very lavish production would be supplied in keeping with their stature.

For those who had distinguished themselves in the field of drama no expense would be spared. The *Epichoregia* would go all out in providing the finest costumes, the most elaborate props, the best musicians, everything would be done to make it the most lavish production ever to hit the stage. We still do this today in Hollywood and on Broadway.

This is the idea brought out by the word *plousios* used with *epichoregeo*, πλουσιῶς ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται. That something is not only going to be provided for us, but **richly provided!** But what is going to be richly provided? **Our entrance into heaven!**

Now we need to clarify two things right here. One, all believers in Jesus Christ are going to be provided an entrance into heaven. And two, but not all believers in Christ are going to be provided a **lavish entrance** into heaven! One's entrance into heaven is guaranteed due to believing in Jesus Christ as their Savior, regardless of whether they moved forward in the Christian life living by the seven virtues of this passage. But for those believers who possessed these qualities and were abounding in them, so that they lived in harmonious rapport with God in this life, for them a lavish entrance into heaven will be provided for them by God!!

God has provided our salvation, our faith in Christ, everything we need for our physical life and our spiritual life, and he has provided a way for us whereby we can live in that state of sweet communion with him. Some call it fellowship, others refer to it as communion, Peter refers to it as partaking in the divine nature, but it's living in a state of harmonious rapport with God.

The translators have rendered the word *eisodos* as into, which is correct, but it doesn't reveal the richness of the idea behind the word. *Eisodos* comes from two words, *eis* – into, and *hodos* – a way, so we have a way into something, hence, an entrance. Found with the definite article, the, it tells us that there is only one way into heaven and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the passage already has the word for into something, *eis*, and is, *he eisodos eis ten aionion basileian tou kuriou hemon kai soteris iesou christou*. So what we have is the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The KJV translates it as, “*an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly*”. And the NIV translates it as, “*you will receive a rich welcome*”. What we actually have is, a lavish entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be provided for you.

Hodos is the word for a way, *eisodos* is a way into, and *exodos* is a way out. But because the passage has been set in the metaphor of the stage, the word *eisodos* now becomes entrance. A phrase we're all familiar with where we would have enter stage left and exit stage right. But for us **our exit is our departure from the stage of this life where we thereupon enter onto the stage of heaven!**

The saying that, “all the world is a stage and we are but actors on it”, certainly has merit in it for we see that the Apostle Peter, when writing to believers in Christ, has put us on the stage of life and we are the actors in our own play. We entered onto this stage, when we believed on Jesus Christ as our Savior, where we now are actors in our own play playing the part, hopefully, of the hero. And at the end of our life, when the final curtain call comes, then we will exit the stage of this life only to enter into heaven and the final phase of our existence of spending eternity with Jesus Christ.

All believers in Christ will enter into the eternal kingdom of the Lord at the end of life, but all will not enter in under the same circumstances. Some will have a lavish entrance, while others will just be just entering. “*If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*” 1 Corinthians 3:15

Picture the Greek stage in those days and you're one of the actors. Would you just want to walk out on stage with no props, no costumes, no music, no setting, stand on a box and say your lines? Or would you rather walk out to a lavish production, beautiful costumes, ornate props and great music? That's the difference for us. I know all believers will be glad to go into Christ's eternal kingdom, but how much better would it be that when you do arrive there you will arrive with pomp and ceremony, lavishness of surroundings and the heralding of your arrival?

Now some believers will say, that's not for me; I'm just a humble person. But wait a minute! What about what God wants? If God has supplied the things that we need so that we can have a lavish entrance into heaven when we arrive there, then that tells us that God wants us to!

In the kingdom believers that have distinguished themselves by doing God's will for their lives, by living in faith and the other things mentioned in the Bible, for these believers there will be fame and commendation, awards and rewards for serving the Lord, “*Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil [booty] with the strong [heroes of the faith]; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*” Isaiah 53:12 People are going to know who you are and what you have done in this life. So having a lavish entrance into the kingdom is quite in keeping with everything else God has for us in his grace.

When we're studying a passage of Scripture we need to look deeply into it to understand the smallest details of what's going on. But we also need to step back from it to see what it's saying. The Apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has used some very interesting terms in his metaphor of the Greek stage and has brought up some very interesting pictures concerning the Christian life. Concepts that give us a framework, an understanding, of what our lives are like here on earth.

But what is he talking about? What is the overall point that he's trying to get across to us? What is he saying that becomes, out of all the things in life that are important, of paramount importance to us? Well basically it's the same thing that the Apostle John was saying, only they use different words to express it. **It's to have fellowship with the Father.** *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”* 1 John 1:3

The things that the Apostle Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 4 deal with fighting the good fight, keeping the faith, the discharge of his duty, passing down the colors to Timothy, etc.. John and Peter talked about other things as well, but the one thing that was of utmost importance to them, as it also was for the Lord himself, was having that harmonious rapport with the Father everyday of their lives!

Mary and Martha with the Lord is a good example of what is really important in the Christian life. Martha had the Lord over for dinner and fellowship with the Lord, but the two women handled the situation differently. Martha was in the kitchen cooking, which for her was a stressful situation because she wanted to make sure that everything went right for the Lord. So much so, that she began worrying about the whole thing, became stressed out, bothered and really upset. To the place that she came out and **told** the Lord to have Mary come in to help her! To which the Lord replied that Mary had chosen the best thing, which was she wanted to have fellowship with him! *“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”* Luke 10:38-42

Now when we look back over this study many concepts are brought out: that we have believed on Christ as our Savior; we received a faith from God giving us equal privilege with all other believers in Christ; that God wants us to have grace and peace multiplied to us; that God has graciously given to us everything that we need for our physical lives on earth and for living our spiritual lives; that we were called to Christ out of God's glory and goodness, not by anything we have done; he has given to us his precious promises so that through faith in him we can partake of the divine nature, which he created in us; we escaped the corruption of the world system, which we should certainly not want to get caught back up in it again; in addition to our faith in Christ he has supplied to us the ability to have mastery over the details of life, Bible Doctrine, the ability to have control over our old sin natures, the ability to move forward in the plan of God for our life, our very own spiritual life to live in now and for all eternity, virtue love for all believers in Christ and virtue love for all unbelievers. He has given us these concepts so that we will be spiritually productive in this life, that we will have impact for God and his Son Jesus Christ with our lives, that we will have the assurance of our eternal salvation, which is certainly important for living life and when one stands at the door of death, and they will ensure that we will have a lavish entrance into heaven. But the thing that stands out the most is fellowship with God!

Pastor Mike

