

Investing in Christian Living

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Preacher: Rev. Malcolm Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn together now to 2 Peter and chapter 1, and we can read at the beginning of verse 3. 2 Peter 1, and at the beginning of verse 3.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

And so on down through this section. It's worth considering tonight where we go from here.

In the Old Testament, as the people of God came to the temple of God, they came to worship. And they were sent away from the temple with the benediction and with the commission to go and to send and to spread the light of God into the world.

They had come to the place where the light was found, and they were sent out with that light to spread it in the world. In the New Testament, we have the same kind of duty, and we have the same kind of command from God to go forward from our times of worship.

[1 : 22] And I want tonight to consider what that might mean for us in the light of the words that we have in this passage. And it's worth noting that as we do read this letter, that Peter is writing it because he was concerned.

And he was concerned in particular because he was afraid that the church would become indistinguishable from the world.

That it would become so much like the society in which it lived by copying its habits that there would be no light in the community in which it was found. And so he is determined to counter the false teaching and to tell the story of the gospel and to do it in such a way that they will do and will be the people of God.

And against that whole determination is the backdrop that we have in the first letter and that we have in the whole of the Old Testament, that God says to his people, you shall be holy because I am holy.

So tonight, where do we go from here? What should we now do, having celebrated the Lord's Supper, having joined the communion of the people of God, and now being ready to go and to serve God?

[2 : 47] I want us to notice, first of all, that we have in this passage an investment. And I want us to see that the investment is in two parts.

And I want us to notice, first of all, that we have the divine investment. God has put a lot into your salvation. And he wants, Peter wants his readers to notice that carefully.

And that's where the passage, the section begins in verse 3. His divine power has granted to us all things. The divine power of God has been invested in the people of God so that they can do what God wants them to do.

And we know, of course, that the power of God is a very broad term. But we also know in the New Testament that the power of God has particularly to do with the Spirit of God.

And we read with regard to the resurrection of Jesus in Romans chapter 1, that he was declared to be the Son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead.

[4 : 01] And so when the New Testament speaks of the power of God, the New Testament is speaking in particular with regard to the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

And when we think of the Spirit of God as being the investment of God in the salvation of his people, we think in particular of two things.

And we think, first of all, of the way in which Jesus himself is the source of that powerful Spirit. And he is that at great cost.

And Jesus is before us in Acts chapter 2 as the dispenser of the Spirit of God. He sends it out into the world. And he does that as somebody who has borne the cost himself, but as somebody who is in particular set apart as the one, as the price that God has paid.

God did not spare his own Son. You, says Peter, are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus.

[5 : 16] The cost is nothing less than the blood of God's Son. And God's investment in our salvation is the life of his Son, poured out in death on the cross, after which he lay in the tomb.

And so we have the cost of the sacrifice of Jesus. And because of that, and because God was pleased with that sacrifice, he sends the Holy Spirit down into the world.

And in that sense, the measure of God's investment in our salvation and in equipping us is the value of the invaluable blood of Jesus Christ.

And if we can measure how valuable that is, that's how much God has invested in our salvation.

And that's also how much he has invested in our life of godliness in the world.

And that's clearly what Peter is saying. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

[6 : 35] It is a gift. And the gift is for that one particular purpose, that we are to live a godly life. That we are going to be devoted to God.

That we are going to be holy people. And that we are going to live our lives in the fear of God. And those who are godly in the pagan temples, they lived their lives terrified of God because if they did anything wrong, that God was going to be angry with them.

But God has invested in our salvation and in our godly lives to give to us the kind of godly fear that is very like love for God.

I'm not afraid of God tonight as I want to serve him. I love him with all of my heart. It's a godly fear.

And God is sending me out tonight to live a holy life after I may come from the Lord's table and from the banner of his love and from being filled with the gospel of Jesus.

And he's telling me that he's invested in me everything that I need to go and serve him. Now that's comforting because one thing I'm going to face every day is that I cannot do the things that God asks me to do.

[8 : 01] That's how I'm going to feel. And God will put me in situations where I'll be face to face with that. But as I go forward to serve him tonight and to follow him, he wants me to carry this with me.

That he's invested everything in me in such a way that he's given me everything I need for life and for godliness. And when he says all things, he means everything as a whole package and he means every individual thing within that package.

It's comprehensive investment in what God wants us to do. And we go in that strength tonight.

Without that, we could do nothing. Without that, we couldn't serve him and we couldn't witness for him. It's too big for us. It's too much for us. But God is telling me, you can do it because I've invested everything into you.

But along with that, I want us also to notice that there is our own investment.

[9 : 13] What do you think God wants you to do? Does he tell you that I've given you everything and then it's just going to happen? God wants us to notice tonight that we have our own investment to make and that serving him and following him is going to come at some cost.

We need to invest in our Christian living if we're going to do what God wants us to do. And that's why Peter says in verse 5 that they are to make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and so on.

They are going to use all of their energy doing one particular thing. And there is a lesson in that itself. how much of my life I spend with my energy divided over a multitude of things and sometimes so much that I don't contribute anything to anything at all.

But God wants me tonight to invest in being a Christian to the extent that I spend all of my energy doing this one thing. And that's challenging.

and that's a discipline that I'm faced with every day that God demands my life my all. He wants me to supplement my faith and that reminds me that his grace is already in my heart.

[10 : 44] it reminds me that he has provided the foundation in my life for all that he wants me to do. And he reminds me that on the basis of what he has given me I'm going to start building.

It's the energy source which is going to feed my life. It's a foundation on which I'm going to build.

Everything that I need is going to grow out of what he has already given me.

And if I could ask somebody on the street in Cappadocia or Asia where Peter was writing what is it what do you mean by supplement your faith?

And they would immediately go into the shows that were put on in the old city of Athens. And amateur dramatics would come and they would put on a show in these arenas. But along with these shows and what made these shows complete were the choruses that were put on surrounding these shows. And these choruses cost a lot of money.

[11 : 57] And the amateurs who were putting the play on they couldn't afford the price of putting this chorus in place. And so there were rich men in the city of Athens and they would have the opportunity to sponsor to cover the cost of putting on the chorus around this drama.

And sometimes it was there was so much prestige along with that that rich men would compete for the right to cover the cost of the chorus.

It was a publicity exercise. they would see their own name over this chorus. They had covered the cost. And now Peter is saying to those whom he is encouraging to go and serve God he is saying to them you are to cover the cost of the chorus.

In other words you are going to surround the gospel of Jesus Christ with a kind of life and of living which will come at great cost but which will have over the chorus the name of Jesus Christ and the cost that you have paid and the cost that Christ has paid will be displayed over the drama of the work of redemption in the world.

And that's a huge investment required on your part and it's also a great honour that when I give my life to serve Jesus he wants me to go out there and I'm going out having been blessed by this gospel and he wants this gospel to be adorned and decorated with the investment of all of my life into serving him so that everything that is displayed for my life will speak loudly of what Christianity is and what Christianity means.

[14 : 01] and there will be as Peter reminded first in the first letter you shall be holy for I am holy here is the chorus look at these people look at that person look at the investment they are making into their lives as disciples of Jesus and look at how much the glory of Jesus can be seen in their lives the prestigious name of of Jesus shining in this community doesn't his investment in our salvation tonight call for and deserve that investment on our part and tonight if we don't feel that it does then we don't understand our salvation and if we don't feel that that's what it requires it begs the question whether we know salvation at all because as soon as we recognize his great cost we are called to take up our own cross and to follow him the investment he has given us everything that we need and he calls us to go and do it secondly

I want us to notice that we have in the passage industry there is a work to be undertaken and again I want us to notice that in the industry that we have in the passage it is divided into two particular directions and the first direction in which this industry this energy that I'm going to spend it's directed towards my relationship with God and that always has to come first what is my relationship with God like and in the way in which Peter wants them to be working and to be industrious and to build up we see the list of things that he has from verse 5 downwards supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge knowledge with self control self control with steadfastness he is referring in the first place to their relationship with

God add to your faith virtue he wants them to be absolute masters in their faith and their understanding of it he wants them to diligently search everything to do with their faith he has given them the faith and now he wants them to add virtue to their faith the building box there is industry there is work to be done I need to learn more and more about my faith because it is in my faith that I have this relationship with God and the way in which I'm going to become a master in my relationship with God is to have better knowledge of him that's simply how Peter goes on add to faith virtue and virtue knowledge that knowledge which comes from familiarity with my God in developing my mastery and my understanding of his word that I come to know him better and tonight the person I know best in the world is the person that I spend time with most and Peter wants his readers and God wants us tonight to spend the best part of our time the cream of our time to spend it developing our relationship with God so that we will know him much better so that I am careful about denying myself the things that interfere with my relationship with God and giving to myself the things that add to my relationship with God and my self control in both of these ways will keep my life balanced will keep my life from being lopsided and will keep me going in the right direction in the straight line of continuing to follow God self control we know how much we need that we don't need anyone to remind us but how often we lose control and we suffer the consequences of that in a relationship with God he wants us to have self control and that self control will give us the steadfastness so that we can be in the chorus and be in that group of people who are directing

and who are leading and who are showing the glory of

[19 : 48] Christ constancy that settled life of continuing with God no matter what and the more the burdens of life and the trials of life are laid upon me the more it directs me squarely and in a straight line and serving God steadfastness my life with God and that's what the people in the Old Testament did they went up to the temple of God and they had access to God through the sacrifice at the temple and they went out from there to be loyal and faithful to God a chosen people a holy nation my treasured possession precious to God because they were being the people that they ought to be and tonight perhaps the biggest challenge

I face is going on from this coming season having my faith strengthened having my love rekindled the biggest challenge to guard against that fire going out and that fire being swamped by the cares of this world that I guard my relationship with God and Robert Murray McChain speaking about the way in which man's heart being filled with God brings satisfaction he says this man was made at the first that all his affections might embrace God just as the seashore with its thousands and creeks and bays was made to be filled by the ocean so the heart of man with its thousands of casping affections was made to be filled and satisfied with

God what an illustration God must be in every corner of your life and of mine he must permeate every part of my being and then I'll be able to go and to serve him and to shine as a light for him and to be someone concerning whom it is true and evident that they have been with Jesus and they go out from Jesus and for Jesus and to represent him in the world that is the industry that I need to have in my relationship with God and it's so easy tonight for us to make our vows to God yes we're going to do that by us keeping our vows that's not quite so easy to go forward remaining committed to him as we go to serve him but there is also our need for devotion to each other and the Bible repeatedly in the Old Testament and the New makes it clear that if I love God then I love the people of God and I'm called upon tonight to go forward devoted to God and also devoted to the people of God and that's what we have from the end of verse 6 steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love the godliness that is required of me in living my life in the fear of God is now a godliness that's going to be evident in the expression of the fear of God in my relationship with the people of God and that highlights two things that I'm going to love them with the same love because it is the love of

God and that I'm going to be afraid that I will hurt the people of God my godly fear means that I don't want to do anything to offend God and I now take all of that into my relationship with my fellow Christian and I'm going to be so devoted to them that I'm going to be careful at every step of the way not to bring about their hurt and I'm going to do that because it's a family love brotherly affection and because it's growing out of the love that is at the center of my relationship with God that redeeming love of God which is the fatherly love of God that out from there I now have love for the people of God and if I'm going to go out into the world to serve the Lord and my devotion to God is going to be challenged and going to be tested at every step of the way

[25 : 27] I can also be sure that in the same measure my devotion to the people of God will be tested in the same way and it wasn't for nothing that John was saying to his own readers that I know I have passed from death to life because I love the brethren it's just a mark of being the children of God because the love is poured out into our hearts there is this natural supernatural holy spiritual relationship that we have with each other and it takes discipline to be devoted to God and it takes discipline to be devoted to each other and if there is one thing that was remarkable during the communion season it was the unity of the people of God and that's priceless it comes at the cost of the blood of

Jesus it comes at the cost of our self denial and it binds us together in the body of Christ and as we go forward to show the love of Christ in the world then we are challenged to continue to guard that unity to develop that unity to feed that unity and to do so with the only thing that will feed it and that is the love of Jesus Christ and the obvious benefits of that unity they bring so much blessing into our lives and so much of a sense of belonging to God that in a real way it reinforces my relationship with God and that's how it should be and the Bible makes it clear that one reinforces the other and the more I love God the more I love the people of God and the more I love the people of God the more I love God and the more the broader my understanding of the love of God in Christ becomes there's a lot of work to be done a lot of industry but when it's a labor of love it's not hard work my commandments are not grievous we do it because we love and we do that towards

God because we love him and we do it towards the people of God because we love them too they are members of the same body and the hand cannot say to the foot I don't need you we are all equally valuable in God's sight equally precious and equally valuable and precious to one another there is an investment and there is an industry and finally there is an insurance and the insurance is such that it will lead us to live exactly the way that God wants to do us and it will keep in focus the very things that we should have in focus in verse 8 for if these qualities are huge and are increasing they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord

Jesus Christ we are sent to bear fruit the fruit of the spirit of God and to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ and I'm reminded of that parable in Hebrews chapter 6 where there is that field and the refreshing rain of heaven comes down upon it and in one instance that field produces thorns and thistles how disappointing I look at a field or a garden and one year it's full of lush flowers and full of the beauty of harvest and a lot of work has gone into it and that's reflected in the outcome come the summer and autumn then I pass the same field or the same garden the following year and I see thorns and thistles and weeds and I see oh how that garden or that field was neglected what happened to the person who in the previous year had spent so much time and energy and had brought so much good out of that soil and Peter tonight through these words is drawing attention to the need that we have as we have noticed in our industry to need the need that we have to work so that our lives won't be like that

I wonder what God thinks about a life with no fruit a life where he sees nothing in return for his investment disappointment doesn't come close to the way in which God sees that kind of life it's the judgment of God the chastisement of God it's the pain that God will bring to recover that a lot of unnecessary work needs to be done to remove the thorns and the thistles and the weeds if the garden had been kept when it should have been but tonight if we do what God wants us to do we have this assurance that we will not be ineffective or unfruitful in other words we shall be effective and we shall be fruitful and let's not lose sight of that it's so easy for us to feel that we cannot make an impact and we won't be effective and that itself can often paralyze us in the service of

[32 : 08] God but God is saying no that's not the way it is if you if you note my investment and if you make your own investment and if you're working out as you should be then you will be effective and we've known that at times in the past and we can prove it to be true again by going out and trusting in God and witness being effective and through that effective serving of Christ bearing fruit in our own lives and the kingdom of Christ expanding and reaching out the insurance against being ineffective and unfruitful and also the insurance and closing against the very thing that we may think is impossible and that is the way in which

Peter speaks in verse 9 for whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins what is an ineffective and fruitful life like what's its outcome in the Christian's experience it is simply to lose sight of God's investment in our salvation it's the unthinkable we've remembered the death of the Lord Jesus and we've remembered that we are saved with nothing less than the precious blood of Jesus do you think it's possible tonight to forget that and to go and live the kind of life where you will lose sight of that the word of God is telling us that it is possible it is possible to forget what God won't forget it is possible for us to lose sight of the great gift of God and the great love of God and that is absolutely connected to my relationship with God you see if the industry is there if I'm devoted to God and I'm developing that intimate relationship with God and my communion with him then I'm never going to lose sight of the precious blood of Jesus and the

Christ who loved me and gave himself for me so let's tonight ensure that we note God's investment in our holy Christian living and let's remember that he has given us everything for us to invest our own lives in that let's remember the kind of industry that God wants us to work out in our lives in our devotion to God and our devotion to each other let's be effective and let's be fruitful and let's never forget the unforgettable experience of the price that Jesus paid for your salvation and for mine and may God help us and grant us grace and strength to enable us to go forward in that way let's bow our heads in prayer to let's protect the thing so to