

A Brief Analysis of II Peter 1:3-9: Bringing in your part
 Author: Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

Some Background

In his first epistle, Peter's main design was to strengthen and comfort his brethren amid the suffering to which they were exposed from the profane (heathen) world (see chapter 4), and he, in his second letter now graciously warns (2 Peter 2:1; 3:1-4) and confirms (2 Peter 1:5-11; 3:14) them against a worse peril from the professing world, from those within Christendom who menaced them. In his first Epistle, Peter had represented their great adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). But here, without directly naming him, he depicts Satan as an angel of light (but in reality the subtle serpent), who is no longer persecuting, but seeking to corrupt and poison them through false teaching. In the second chapter those false teachers are denounced (1) as men who had denied the Lord that bought them (v. 1), and (2) as licentious (vv. 10-14, 19), giving free play to their carnal appetites. (Italics are not mine, PNM.)

Peter gives us a warning at the very end of this second letter that will prove to have some relation to what he is now saying at the beginning. In II Peter 3:17, 18, Peter says, *"Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

Let me set before you the text that we are going to examine in this paper. Upon doing so, we can look more intently into its meaning.

II Peter 5:3-10

(3) His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

(4) through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

(5) For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

(6) And to knowledge self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

(8) For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(9) But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

(10) Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.

I feel obligated to set forth the first two verses of the epistle to aid me in what I am trying to do with verses 3-8. They read as follows: (1) *“SIMON PETER, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: (2) Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” A brief comment on these first two verses.*

The righteousness of God in this passage has to do with the righteous dealings of God in this matter because what he has provided to the Jews, he has provided to the Gentiles on an equal basis. The term faith in this passage refers to the gospel. In verse two, the term “knowledge” is not from [*gnosis*] which is Greek for knowledge, but rather from the Greek [*epignosis*] which signifies knowledge toward something, always maturing but never matured. It is within this knowledge that grace and peace are made to abound. The idea of abounding in something ever maturing but never coming to maturity is fascinating to conceive!

Verses three and four read as follows: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (NIV).” The idea that the God of all would call us into his kingdom and not provide everything we would need for success is absolutely illogical! Everything we need for spiritual life the soul possesses and the godliness needed (as Guy N. Woods said) to preserve and maintain it comes from his divine power. Furthermore, God’s glory and goodness has produced great and precious promises. And because of these great and precious promises we can escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires, as well as participate in the divine nature. Guy N. Woods makes some remarks worthy of repeating in this paper that can certainly clarify verse 4. He says,

“By availing themselves (speaking of those who are the partakers, sharers, partners) of these precious and exceeding great promises they (the sharers, partners) are privileged to share in the divine nature—the holy character which God possesses...” “Man was originally in the image, and after the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26); but this image and rational likeness was lost in the fall. It is restored to man in the transformation which occurs in conversion (2 Cor. 3:8; Col. 3:10). “Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” is in the Greek text, “having escaped from the corruption that is in the world in lust.” The meaning is, that corruption is in the world; it operates through lust; and only those who are partakers of the divine nature escape its ravages.

I will now look at verses five through eight from the Amplified version (which does not subtract any importance stated in the KJV). The verses read as follows:

For this very reason, adding your diligence [to the divine promises], employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue (excellence, resolution, Christian energy); and in [exercising] virtue [develop] knowledge (intelligence),

*and in [exercising] knowledge [develop] develop self-control;
and in [exercising] self-control [develop] steadfastness
(patience, endurance), and in [exercising] steadfastness
[develop] godliness (piety), and in [exercising] godliness
[develop] brotherly affection, and in [exercising] brotherly
affection [develop] Christian love. For as these qualities
are yours and increasingly
abound in you, they will keep [you] from being idle or
unfaithful unto the (full personal) knowledge of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the messiah, the Anointed One.*

The evolution from faith to love is nothing accidental—God’s methodology is reasonable. Woods makes an excellent point. He alludes to the Greek word (*pareisenegkantes*) occurring no where else in the Greek Testament, and meaning literally “bringing in by the side of.” The term indicates the comparative unimportance of man’s participation in his salvation by suggesting that his part is merely contributory, “brought in by the side of what God does,” and yet is absolutely essential, since God’s part is done only on condition that man complies with his. Peter admonishes “all diligence.” “Diligence” is from *spoude*, meaning **to hasten**. All children of God are thus exhorted **to hasten** to bring in their part, though small and insignificant compared with what God does for us, in order that they may avail themselves of the blessings which the Father has made available to them.

There are provisions which God has set in place that are needed for the voyage. The dogged determination to please God in the matter says much about the way we view salvation. We do not sit on the side lines awaiting the invitation; we are fighting through the crowds to get to where we are supposed to be in the scheme of things. We have come to recognize the incalculable value of the possession which lies before us both in terms of the graces, and more importantly “eternal life.” We have seen in our most desperate hours how bleak our condition would have been had God not intervened in the manner he did. We surveyed our lot and found it deserted, barren of the entire spiritual infrastructure needed to sustain us during those difficult times. As we gave further thought to this, we turned in our minds to the only source that could help us out of the mess we created—God. Repentance is a power tool of God. There is nothing like coming to yourself like the prodigal son. Now our determination is aimed at a proper target. No voices behind us will change our direction. No pleas matter! No tears from those who do not plan to join us! Our backs are sufficiently turned to the life we once lived to our shame. Those energies of ours once used to do all that was counter to God have now been harnessed (what is left) to find him and those things he has to offer. And so here we are—at the gate of the 5th verse. Eyes forward, mind forward, with new purpose we have come to please God beginning with faith. “*Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb.11:6).*”

Now as regarding faith, it is the foundation of the process, and its presence is not without power. In his use of the American Standard Version, Brother Guy N. Woods, in his work entitled **A COMMENTARY ON THE New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude (1991)**. That version introduces verse 5 by saying, “in your faith supply virtue.” *The Greek word epichoregeo is highly suggestive and interesting in the implications which follow from its origins. Originally it meant to found and support a chorus, and to lead a choir, to keep in*

tune, and then, to supply or provide. Virtue (courage and soul vigor, the manliness and the determination to do that which is right) is supplied by faith. Did we catch that? If faith can supply that to virtue, what in turn can virtue supply? Reconsider the definition of virtue—courage and soul vigor, manliness and the determination to do that which is right. In this definition knowledge is discovered. The translation of faith into action creates a language (if you will) that defines manliness, moral vigor, and a determination to do what is right. Practicing manliness through that determination to do what is right produces knowledge. The will to exercise faith is the desire to do what is right, and to do what is right is to not do what is wrong. Doing what is right allows us to see what is not right. This is discernment. This is knowledge.

As we move into self-control which knowledge supplies, we use the knowledge to enhance self-government—we rule our natures. Solomon said, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city (Proverbs 16:32, NAS).” James said, “For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well (James 3:2, NAS).” The need for self-control cannot be over emphasized due to the fact that we live in a world that absolutely demands it. In two verses, Solomon shows the need for the restraint of the tongue. “The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips come to ruin (Proverbs 13:3, NAS).” And again, “He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles (Proverbs 21:23, NAS).” William Edwy Vine said, in his book VINE’S CONCISE DICTIONARY of BIBLE WORDS (page 374), “In 2 Peter 1:6, self-control follows “knowledge,” suggesting that what is learned requires to be put into practice.”

Life is a journey of good and evil. It can be understood from the animal kingdom that rabbits, deer, and hummingbirds live with cobras, lions, and alligators. One needs to be tough to survive, to endure the trials of life. There are two Greek terms that will help us to appreciate the significance of the word; they are **makrothumia** and **hupomone**. The first looks at endurance, constancy, forbearance, and longsuffering. Hupomone means “a remaining under,” steadfastness, constancy, a patient waiting for. “Makrothumia will be found to express patience in respect of persons, hupomone in respect of things. We should speak, therefore, of the makrothumia of David (II Samuel 16: 10-13, the hupomone of Job (James 5:11, Unger).” Patience is defined Merrill F. Unger’s Bible Dictionary in the following manner:

“Patience is that calm and unruffled temper with which the good man bears the evils of life, whether they proceed from persons or things. It also manifests itself in a sweet submission to the providential appointments of God, and fortitude in the presence of the duties and conflicts of life. This grace saves one from discouragement in the face of evil (Luke 21:19); aids in the cultivation of godliness (II Peter 1:6), the development of the entire Christian character (James 1:4), and continued in to the end, will terminate in reward in the life to come (Romans 2:7; James 5:7, 8).

This calm and unruffled temper cannot be had without self-control. It cannot be had without knowledge. It cannot be had without virtue. It cannot be had without faith. All must be working uniformly. It I may add at this point (I think it biblically relevant to bring James 1:2-

4 to bear since we are dealing with patience). It reads in the New American Standard as follows:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” As a microscope brings an image’s depth more into focus, I use the Amplified to do the same with this verse.

“Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort, or fall into various temptations. Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed (with no defects), lacking in nothing.”

In verse six, Peter says, “in your patience godliness.” The idea here is submission. Think about it. Woods makes the comment that “Patience is approved only when it results in submission to the burdens of life for the sake of pleasing the Father.” If you are going through difficult times accept those times graciously that God may be pleased and honored. Godliness, were it a degree to be sought by man, would so surpass any known document that none can come to the mind (of this writer) worth mentioning as a near second. To have the mind of God is light-years beyond what Albert Einstein imagined, and yet an uneducated Christian who has matured in the graces stands far closer proximity to God’s thinking than Einstein. Having a minute understanding of how God’s universe works does not draw God’s attention to one’s intellect. Growing in the love of God draws the attention of God. Growing in godliness, and having it with contentment, is in the sight of God acceptable. To be godlike is to listen to the words that Jesus spoke on the Sermon on the Mount. He said, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy.*

’ But, I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:43-45).”

Peter says in verse 7, “And in your godliness brotherly kindness.” The notion of brotherly kindness without godliness is unthinkable. Brotherly love from John’s viewpoint must be now considered. He says, “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (I John 3:11). “We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you no that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (verses 14, 15).” If God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, it behooves us to restore those who have been overtaken in a fault (Galatians 6:1); it behooves us to convert one from error (James 5:19, 20). Godliness would have us not to judge (Matthew 7:1ff). Godliness would have us bear each other’s burdens (Romans 15:1ff). John said, “But whoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him (I John 3:17)?” When we have

done well in this grace, we are to move on to the crowning grace—love. For a treatment on this grace, see I Corinthians 13:4-7. Love as seen in the Amplified New Testament would be thus represented. Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy; is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited—arrogant and inflated with pride; it is not rude (unmannerly), and does not act unbecomingly. Love [God’s love in us] does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it—pays no attention to a suffered wrong. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything [without weakening].

“For if these qualities are yours and increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins (II Peter 1:8, 9).” In this verse we see the importance of verses five through seven. How is it that we think that the true way of attaining knowledge of scripture is merely by the running of references? While this is true relating to those areas which do not form character (the running of references that is), true knowledge is attained only through Peter’s process. It is a process that needs to be acted on quickly and with purpose (2 Peter 1:5). The apostle Paul said the following to the Colossians (I quote from the Amplified Version):

Also he has informed us of your love in the Holy Spirit. For this reason we also, from the day we heard of it, have not ceased to pray and make [special] request for you, [asking] that you may be filled with the full (deep and clear) knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom [that is, in comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God] and in understanding and discernment of spiritual things. That you may walk (live and conduct yourselves) in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him and desiring to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing and increasing in (and by) the knowledge of God—with fuller, deeper and clearer insight, acquaintance and recognition. [We pray] that you may be invigorated and strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, [to exercise] every kind of endurance and patience (perseverance and forbearance) with joy (Colossians 1:8-11).

Like the fifth verse in terms of “making every effort,” we arrive at the tenth verse which begins with “be all the more eager.” That diligence is crucial in our business of Christianity must not be overlooked by anyone. Hence the words of the Hebrew writer, So, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Hebrews 3:7, 8.). In making our calling and election sure, there are two things that are involved. The calling is from the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14). The election is our acceptance of the gospel. To make it secure, we give our most powerful effort to the things found in verses five through seven.

