

South Bay Community Church
Sermon Reflections
Deeply Rooted
17 September 2023
Minister Paula Fuller

Scripture Text: 2 Peter 1: 1-15

Sermon Preamble

In your life's journey, are you going through a period of transition? For the past few months, Minister Paula Fuller has been going through a time of transition. She just completed 18 years of ministry and Executive Leadership with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. This period of transition in her life has been a good time to wrestle with and reflect on deepening her spiritual roots. The scriptural passage we are looking at today is 2 Peter 1:1-15. The Apostle Peter is writing to a group of believers who are living in a time of transition and uncertainty, much like the chaotic and complex nature of our world today. God's Word's assures us of the power of God, reminds us of the preciousness of our faith, and challenges us about the importance of spiritual growth. Then we can participate in God's Divine Nature and receive a warm welcome in our eternal dwelling.

Scripture Text of 2 Peter 1:1-15

“¹Simon 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: ²Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ⁵for this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸For 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. ⁹But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleaned from their past sins. ¹⁰Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ¹²So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴because I know that I will soon put it aside, as of Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.” (2 Peter 1: 1-15).

Times of transition, uncertainty, and receiving God's goodness

The Apostle Peter is writing to a group of believers who are living in a time of transition and uncertainty. Christians in the early church had a sense that Jesus would return any day, but the first generation of believers who had witnessed Jesus or knew people who had experienced His ministry were dying. Believers were starting to feel alarmed and shaky. False teachers were denying Christ's return and denying that there would even be a judgement. As a result, people were falling back into sinful habits and losing hope.

Peter writes to encourage early Christians and for us today to hold onto the promises of God. The delay of Christ's return is an act of God's mercy. The delay gives more people an opportunity to repent and come to knowledge of the truth (2 Peter 3:8-10).

Today, we are also living in a time of enormous transitions and uncertainties, with feelings of alarm and shakiness, false teachers, and people falling back into sinful habits and losing hope. But as followers of Jesus, we are recipients of God's goodness.

Goodness through Christ's righteousness, we receive a precious faith

The Apostle Peter knew firsthand the value and power of the faith we have in Christ. “To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours” (2 Peter 1:1).

Earlier in his life, Peter saw Jesus walking on the water. Peter asked to join Jesus. Jesus says, “Come,” and Peter walks on water. (Matthew 14:28-29). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter experiences the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He preaches, calls the crowd to repent, and three thousand people come to faith (Acts 2:40-41). Peter and John are walking to the temple, and Peter sees a beggar expecting money and says, “Silver and God I do not have, but what I have, I give to you...in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Walk...and he does (Acts 3:4-6).

Peter experiences the challenges of faith. Walking on water, he sank when he took his eyes off Jesus (Matthew 14:30). After telling Jesus he would die with him, Jesus told him, “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me 3 times” (Mark 14:30). That happened, and Peter was devastated (Mark 14:66-72).

Peter had the challenge of communicating the power and richness of faith to people who had not walked with Jesus. As we share our faith, we have that same challenge.

Blessings come through Knowing God and Jesus Christ, God's power, and God's promises.

Through *knowing God and Jesus Christ*, we receive an abundance of grace and peace. “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:2).

Through *God's Power*, we receive *everything* we need for life and godliness. “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3).

Through God's glory and goodness, we receive *great and precious promises*. “Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises.” (2 Peter 1:4). These are not just promises, but they are *very great and precious promises*. Do you join me in thinking, “What are these very great and precious promises?”

The promises of God are “Yes” in Jesus Christ

The Apostle Paul affirms the promises of God in 2 Corinthians. “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through Him, the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (2 Corinthians 1:20-22). With regards to God's promises to help us live a godly life, we know the answer is already YES!

Make every effort; where are you expending your effort?

Having reminded believers of what God gave them, Peter challenges them (and us) to make a commitment to growth. “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge” (2 Peter 1:5). There is a shift in the scripture from what God has done to what we, as believers, are to do.

We each have a finite and limited amount of energy to expend each day, week, month, and year. Where are you expending your energy?

The messages in our culture direct us to expend effort building financial wealth, pursuing pleasure, maximizing our physical beauty and youthfulness, pursuing an idealistic body size, and embracing the latest technological innovations like AI. We can master the latest TikTok challenge or create a video that will go viral. How can I figure out ways to monetize content on social media to build wealth? Building wealth, preparing for retirement, taking care of our health, and looking good are not bad things. But individually or collectively they can consume all of our energy and effort, leaving little or no time for developing godliness. We can spend our days “making a living” without prioritizing building a life.

If we listen primarily to messages from news sources, sports, entertainment, self-help, etc. we would hear little to no encouragement to *invest time getting to know God and pursue moral excellence*. If you intentionally search YouTube seeking messages for that purpose, you may find some.

Godliness holds promises both for the present life and the life to come

Godliness has a higher return on investment than exercise! The Apostle Paul affirms in 1Timothy: “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” (1Timothy 4:8). Both physical training and godliness are good. Every now and then, we need to be reminded about the eternal life to come.

Virtues are faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love

Peter details a list of virtues. ⁵“for this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.” (2 Peter 1:5-7). Peter is not telling us to simply work harder to do better. Building character and progressing with this list of virtues is not a function of self-effort. The faith we receive from God and the ability to participate in God’s divine nature is what results in our spiritual growth. We are being transformed by God.

Peter challenges the followers of Jesus to “make every effort” (v. 5). This phrase conveys a sense of priority, commitment, consistency, and continual effort. There is a progression that starts with the faith we receive at the beginning of the process, and it ends with love.

For those committed, the end result is internal excellence in community and in your life as a witness of God’s love

For those committed to building on their faith and growing spiritually, the end result is effectiveness and productivity in their knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. “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” (2 Peter 1:8). The moral excellence you are developing internally is expressed in community with other believers. Our life becomes a powerful witness of God’s love.

How is your vision? You have been cleansed from past sins

Without these virtues, we forget that we have been cleansed from past sins. “ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.” (2 Peter 1:9).

The final virtue on the Apostle Peter’s list is *love* that binds all other virtues together, and we receive a rich welcome into the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ

As recorded in the Gospel of John, Jesus declares, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35). The Church is not known for our love. We are far too often described as *hypocritical*—people who say one thing and fail to live out what we profess. Could this be, in part, because far too many Christians define Christianity as simply a one-time decision to pray for salvation? Instead, the Christian life is an ongoing relationship with Christ where we are challenged to grow spiritually until we receive a rich welcome into the eternal Kingdom of God. “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every

effort to confirm your calling and elections. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Examine your spiritual rhythm of life

We should examine our rules and rhythms that support our spiritual journey. These spiritual disciplines that support our spiritual journey include Bible reading, prayer, fasting, study, worship, etc. In *Celebration of Disciplines*, authored by Richard Foster, he describes that the three types of disciplines are inward, outward, and corporate.

Helpful steps include: (1) review the spiritual disciplines and restorative activities that support your spiritual growth, (2) create support and accountability partnerships, such as partnerships in Small Groups, (3) be intentional about spiritual growth that nourishes your faith and experiment over the next 90 days with new spiritual disciplines and activities to deepen your spiritual roots.

Like the root system of Sequoia Trees, there is power in community

There are several passages of scripture that compare people to trees. In Psalms 1, "Blessed is the one...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers" (Psalms 1:1-3). In Jeremiah, "the man who trusts in the lord is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream...it doesn't fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green, has no worry in the year of drought never fails to bear fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

Often the taller a tree, the deeper the root system in providing power for the tree. However, this is not true in a forest of Sequoia trees. In a forest of Sequoias, there is an interlocking root system up to 100 feet away from the base of the tree. The roots from each tree in the forest of Sequoias fuse together, providing incremental support for each tree. Each of us, as a follower of Jesus, is crucial to the root system of other followers of Christ. There is power in the community of believers.

Prayer and Holy Listening to refresh our memory

Peter wrote this letter to believers who were firmly established in the truth. It wasn't new information. Peter wanted to refresh their memory as long as he was alive and for them to remember after he was gone. "So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things." (2 Peter 1: 12-15).

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to refresh our memory and listen for what God would say to us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDING FOR USE IN FAMILY GROUP

Sermon Preamble

-Have you now or in the past faced a period of transition and uncertainty? How did you feel during this period?

Times of transition, uncertainty, and receiving God's goodness

-In what ways have you received God's goodness in a time of transition or uncertainty?

Goodness that through Christ's righteousness, we have received a precious faith

-The precious faith could be the objective faith or body of truth known by an individual. What is your testimony of the essential truths of your knowledge of who Jesus is and what Jesus did? What lies at the heart of your objective faith that you are challenged to share with others? The precious faith could also refer to one's ability to trust God. Do both meanings of faith have relevance to you? Why?

Blessings come through knowing God, God's power, and God's promises.

-What blessings have you benefited from in knowing God, God's power, and God's promises?

The promises of God are "Yes" in Jesus Christ

-What has God done for you that make God's promises "Yes" for your life journey and the life after?

Make every effort; where are you expending your effort?

-Why should you be intentional with zeal and seriousness regarding your limited energy in making the effort towards your commitment to spiritual growth?

Godliness holds promises both for the present life and the life to come

-Why is it important to be reminded of God's promises, not only in the present life, but also in the life to come?

Virtues are faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love

-Let's look at the process of receiving the virtues. Are these virtues something that you can do on your own by working harder to achieve them? Are these virtues something that is imposed on us by God that rule out human activity? Are these virtues a work of God in which we partner with God and believers? What biblical principles support your answer?

For those committed, the end result is internal excellence in community and in your life as a witness of God's love

-Are these virtues all received at salvation, or are they received as we progress in our life journey? How does 2 Peter 1:8 answer this question?

How is your vision? You have been cleansed from past sins

-How is your memory and vision? What is the reason that verse 9 describes some as nearsighted and blind?

The final virtue on the Apostle Peter's list is love that binds all other virtues together, and we receive rich welcome into the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ

-Why is love the queen of the virtues denoting self-sacrificing action in behalf of another. Why must Godly people who participate in the divine nature abound in love?

Examine your rhythm of life

-To apply this message to your life now, what spiritual disciplines and activities are you willing to experiment with over the next 90 days to intentionally nourish your spiritual growth?

Like the root system of Sequoia Trees, there is power in community

-How can you interlock your deepened root system with other believers so that each of you are stronger spiritually than you are on your own?

Prayer and Holy Listening to refresh our memory

-Like Peter, why is it important for each of us to pray and engage in holy listening to continue our ministry with diligence until our death or the second coming of Jesus Christ so as to strengthen the church?