

Exiles: Faithfully Present in a Foreign Land

28—Very Great Promises

31 May 2026

2 Peter 1:1–4

Will Almeida

1. Intro:

- a. I remember when I was a kid that my high school had this thing called “spirit week”. It’s when for an entire week you dressed up in school colors, or decorated yourself with face paint with school related things. The hallways would be decorated, and students who were in charge of cheering this on, could interrupt class to face paint something that encouraged school spirit.
- b. I of course always thought this was super weird. I never got into it. You might love these kind of things. I always thought “why are you so eager to identify yourself with this school”? It’s just a high school? Who cares, you’ll all be out of here in 4 short years and never see 99% of the people here ever again. I remember one cheerleader coming up to my desk once and getting me in trouble for not wearing the color red that I guess I was supposed to be wearing on that day, so instead she offered to face paint a Dutch wooden shoe on my face. I was horrified and in my grumpiest demeanor possible I declined. I don’t want to wear the school colors, I don’t want a wooden shoe on my face, I don’t care that I’m a Holland High School student, I’m not zealous about living out this identity. I was a really difficult kid.
- c. Of course school isn’t the only place this happens. When I worked at the bank I was a manager and I was in charge of being the one who promoted the company swag. I was pushing my direct reports to care about the bank, to wear the company logo and to show an eager desire to identify as an employee of this company. We had history lessons on the founding of the bank, we could trace mergers and acquisitions of the bank to the present day. And of course on this end of things, I was the one pushing everyone to care about this identity as a bank employee- not realizing the irony of how much I hated this kind of thing when I was a student.
- d. This morning we have a text about that kind of eager desire, or better worded, zealotry to an identity not in an earthly institution like school or work, but in the very nature of God. Let us read 2 Peter 1:5-11.

Text:

5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being

ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. The beginning starts with “[For this very reason]”:
 - a. Everything we’re about to talk about is “for this very reason”, so at this time it is helpful to figure out what is the “very reason” we are being so encouraged to take action.
 - b. This very reason refers to all of verse 3-4. So even though there are many things listed, it is a singular reason because when God blesses us, He gives abundantly and never a bare minimum. So all these things are one reason:
 - i. All things that pertain to life and godliness
 - ii. The gift of his precious and very great promises
 - iii. The partaking of the divine nature
 - iv. Escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of sin
 - c. So because of what was done for us in the past (the rescue from sin), what is being done for us now, the present, (partaking of the divine nature and the gift of life and godliness), but also because of what is packed in for us in the future (entrance into the eternal kingdom) – not in v3-4 but in v10.
 - d. It’s a complete and abundant package of gifts from God. An important fact to not miss is this: These are gifts that are even better than what Adam and Eve had. Adam and Eve were never given the opportunity to partake of the divine nature. They could co-rule with God in creation as image bearers, but never from the position of participating in the divine nature. This is something that is only possible because God became man, and then turned us into sons and daughters of God who share His nature.
 - e. At school and at work, they give you an identity. You are a student of this school or you are an employee of this company, then they expect obligations out of us. Study in school or work at our jobs because we are a part of that institution.
 - f. This is similar in that we receive an identity from God, but then we are invited to participate in the very nature of that identity marker. At a job you don’t identify with the business resolutions. At a school you don’t identify with the Tax ID or the 501c paperwork. With God, He’s gives us the identity and then allows us to partake in its source and life more than just an institution.
 - g. For this very reason, we are participating in the divine nature despite of our feelings. So here in this text God reminds us of His invitation.

3. And that brings us to the central point of this text. We ought to desire to partake in this identity that God has given us. We are all partaking in it, not like Adam and Eve just because we image God, but in a greater sense because we are now Sons and Daughters of God as Christians. We incarnate the invisible qualities of God.
 - a. So! Look at verse 5 “make every effort to supplement your faith” there are 2 imperative commands there, and one of those same Greek nouns in that phrase is repeated again in verse 10 in verb form as an imperative and translated as “diligent” in English.
 - i. Peter is saying “make every effort to supplement your faith and be diligent in doing so”.
 - ii. IOW - Be [**Zealous**]!
 - iii. To be zealous is to pursue something at great personal cost.
 - b. Now notice how we can “increase” these qualities in verse 8 “for if these qualities are yours and are increasing”. At some level, all Christians are participating in the divine nature, (some more some less), Peter is saying be the kind of person that lives out the identity they already have. Wear all the company swag, the face paint, cheer at the home coming game of Jesus and His church. Because of what God has done for you. Not because you get to have a pizza party and wear jeans on Fridays, but because your sins are forgiven. You are now partaking in the divine nature with the Creator of the universe!
 - c. There’s another benefit Peter gives (as if he even has to) in verse 10. And that is that increasing these qualities confirms our call and election, “¹⁰be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fail”. To repeat, this does not cause our call and election, it simply confirms it. Similarly if I wear a red shirt that does not cause me to be a Holland High School student. Why do these churches that Peter is writing to need to confirm their call and election? Well, if you read the rest of 2 Peter it is filled with people who are in the church spreading destructive heresies (literally what it says in 2:1). The knowledge of our standing before God is challenged through false teaching and false teachers. This is something that Peter is going to fight against a lot in this book.
 - i. God doesn’t just want to save us, He wants us to know that we are saved. He wants us to have this assurance that He has not left us. He wants us to actually know in our hearts that we belong to Him.
 - d. Next benefit to practice these 7 quality traits (as if Peter needs to give any) is found in verse 11 “¹¹For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord”. That word “provided” is the same word as “supplement” in verse 5. It creates an interesting point. If we strive for this, God will richly reward us in heaven for the striving that we did here. This is a reminder that while we do not receive any punishment for sins, it’s not as if God

doesn't care about the good that we do here and now. He in fact rewards us for it. Peter says it here, and Paul says this more clearly in **2 Corinthians 5:10**: **“¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil”**. If we increase these qualities to our faith, God will richly reward us for increasing them.

- i. Don't forget my Christian brother and sister, God richly rewards us. What a strong positive benefit it is to increase these qualities!
 - ii. At school or at work, we are expected to be eager to associate ourselves with that identity based on merit. We earn the grades we worked for or we earn money through our labor. This is an eagerness for simply receiving what's fair. This is not the Christian experience. We are encouraged to be eager because God wasn't fair to us and He did not give us what we did deserve (He gave us heaven instead of hell), and then will later richly give us what we do not deserve (richly rewarding us in heaven). God loves being generous to us.
4. Now, there are some negatively stated reasons to increase these 7 Christian qualities, and it's important to state them negatively because it's the easiest to identify in our lives when they happen. It's hard to gauge positives sometimes, and it's easier to spot things when they are negatively stated.
- a. First is the second half of verse 8, "...being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". Ineffective means idle. Can a Christian remain idle if faith without works is dead (James 2)? If every tree that doesn't bear fruit is cursed then, can a Christian be unfruitful (Matt 3, Mark 11, Luke 13)? "Knowledge" here in v8 is intimate knowledge. Can a Christian have a heart that desires less intimacy with Jesus?
 - i. This negatively stated reason is here because it's easy to look at our lives and ask the question: Am I idle in my Christian life? If so, I should increase these 7 qualities in my life, I'm already a Christian. Am I not producing fruit in my Christian life? If so, I should really increase these 7 qualities, I'm already a Christian.
 - b. There is a second negatively stated reason to practice these things, in verse 9. If we don't, we become "so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins". We start to see things the way the world sees them, instead of how God sees them when we neglect to live the Christian life God wants us to live. It's easier to start believing lies about God, and about ourselves when we walk away from the Christian walk. This is the kind of blindness that forgets who Jesus is. It causes us to not see that His sacrifice on the cross was enough to pay for every sin. It causes us to think and act like the world when it comes to our relationship with God and our understanding of sin. It forgets that God is deeply interested in having a relationship with us and it

conjures up imaginative scenarios where we've done things that are too heinous to bring to God's attention.

- i. Here's a quick test to see if you have experienced this in your life. If you or someone you know has ever thought "I have sinned way too much to go to church" you are experiencing this blindness.
- ii. If you or someone you know has ever said "There's no way New City can find out about this sin, they'll just condemn me" then you are experiencing this kind of blindness.
- iii. If you or someone you know has said, "I can't go to church, they don't want me, or my kind of people there", that person is experiencing the forgetfulness of Jesus's desire for that individual.
- iv. Increasing these qualities in our lives will remind us of truth and keep us from these kinds of errors.

5. [5 things to remember about the 7 quality traits]

- a. Realizing that this great thing that God has done, Peter proceeds to enflame our wills with a call to act. He gives us 7 quality traits to incorporate into our lives. Peter builds out the application of this sermon right there into this list of 7 quality traits. So we're going to leave the 7 quality traits to the application part of this message. My hope today is for God to speak to your heart about at least one of these for you to consider as you go about your week.
- b. First thing to remember, [This is for Christians]. The thing to keep in mind about these 7 quality traits is that they are added/supplemented to "your faith" v5. Meaning, the audience of this letter already has a faith rooted in Jesus and they already trust God. They are already Christians. Faith then isn't a quality trait. Faith is what you and I add these 7 quality traits on.
 - i. Verse 1 already says that you've obtained the faith of equal standing, and that we have received all things because of this faith and that we are partakers of the divine nature because of this faith.
 - ii. These 7 quality traits are adding to an existing faith, they aren't building blocks to create faith or to create salvation or to create a right standing before God. All of these things have already been given, and the first 4 verses of the chapter are clear on this matter.
- c. Second, [these are not mile-markers] or checkpoints. It's not as if we conquer one and then move on to the next. They are all to be part of our walk.
- d. Third, is that [all quality traits can increase]. The Greek is rendered in a way that we're adding all of these to our faith. Add or supplement virtue among knowledge, among self-control, among steadfastness, among godliness, among brotherly affection, among love to the faith. This isn't like the gift of prophecy or teaching that serves the church uniquely because God wants you in that body doing that specific thing. Verse 8 makes it clear that all of these we can practice

and all of them can increase if we practice them. Spiritual gifts like administration for example are given according to the measure that the Spirit gives. These 7 are all things we can do as Christians because we all share in the divine nature which naturally practices these things.

- e. Third, about these 7 quality traits is [God is working in you to will these things]. It's important to be reminded that God both gives us the power to do this, (that's found in verse 3-4) and the will to do it. It is written "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." – (Phil 2:12-13). This is indeed the mystery of working out our sanctification with God. He gives us the power and ability but then we also have a responsibility and human opportunity to choose whether or not we engage with the invitation to be more like Jesus.
 - f. Fourth, [this isn't an exhaustive list] of things of qualities available to a Christian. There are many more quality traits of an infinite God. However, Peter writes these 7 qualities because he thinks (by The Spirit) that these 7 things will help his audience who struggle with the world that they live in their place and time. So if you have read 2 Peter and feel like "hey this sounds really familiar to the world I live in now" then these 7 things would be great for you to practice. In fact, you are now living in a time and place where you are encouraged to increase these traits, just like Peter's churches because New City is reading this text.
6. Finally then we get to the application. The 7 quality traits.
- a. We start by adding [virtue] to faith. Virtue is simply the excellencies of God. This word was used in verse 3 when God called us into His "glory and excellence(same word as virtue here)". Paul says if it's 'excellent', think on these things. Same word. In 1 Peter 2:9 we read that God made us a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, to proclaim the "excellencies" of God (same word as translated virtue). In the OT this word is always associated with God's glory or goodness, and usually in the context of praise. So "adorn the Gospel" as it says in Titus 2:10 is a great way to think about this.
 - i. How do we do that? Just like during spirit week, or a company celebration, you don't put up ugly decorations. That would not communicate that you have any spirit in the school if the streamers and banner you put up show zero effort. Likewise, add to your faith in God praiseworthy things to God for the great marvels that God has made. That means make your Christian life beautiful within whatever realm God has put you in and gifted you for. Are you good at writing? Write something that would bring glory to God. Are you musical, make good music as unto the Lord. Are you good at talking to people? Do that in a way that brings glory to God; not make God seem uglier. Work on mastering the wonderful goodness of creation so that the world sees praiseworthy things.

As an example cathedrals were built in part because medieval Christians pursued to add virtue to their faith.

- ii. It's important to do this in our Christian walk because this word (virtue) was very popular in Greek culture particularly among the Stoics of the day of 2 Peter. They defined virtue in a certain way and also thought that they'd be better off by adding virtue to their life. This virtue is different because when we add Divine-Nature-Virtue we are adding more of God's excellence in our lives, in the lives of others and the world. We're not conjuring up any excellency outside of God. Root all praiseworthy things then, in God.
- b. Among adding virtue, we're going to add [knowledge]. This knowledge is different than the knowledge of Jesus found in verse 8. There it is an intimate knowledge of Jesus, (that's the goal of all of this) but that's one particular Greek word. Here we're talking about another Greek word that doesn't include intimacy. How can you wear the right school colors if you don't know the colors of your school? That's what this is. Add knowledge of the faith to your faith.
- i. How do we do that? Participate in what Jesus is doing. Find out what He's up to in the world. Read the Bible a lot. Listen to sermons, come to Bible study, be trained by the mature men and women in the church. Care about it, spend your effort learning Jesus's opinion on things. What's He think about AI? What's He think about painted sidewalks? Having the cheer team walking around from class to class was a quick way for me to learn what was actually important in that school. I learned a lot about its heritage. If I didn't understand the Holland High heritage before, I certainly did after declining the facepaint.
 - ii. Again, the Greek world around Peter and his churches were very interested in knowledge too, but it was never a knowledge for the faith. So Peter goes on and on in this book about the incorrect knowledge of the faith and calls that "destructive". He names "false teachers" who are "accursed", who "blaspheme", who are "greedy", "lawless", etc... Participating in the divine nature allows us to grow in the knowledge of that very nature so as to not believe false things about the nature we share in.
- c. Among virtue and knowledge, we are adding [self-control]. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit and restraining ourselves is active participation of the divine nature. When we restrain our instinctual desires through the power of God (not through the flesh) we partake in the life of Jesus. Pairing self-control with zeal is really interesting because the idea is, if you can withhold an evil desire, then do it. Be zealous to not act.

- i. How do we go about doing this? Paul uses an analogy in 1 Corinthians 9:25 “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.”. Be zealous for the prize at the end of the period of self-control. Be zealous for the works of God that you will get to do in the church because you have been practicing self-control. Be zealous about what you can contribute to your city-group by zealously restraining your free time and turning it into time you focus on the members of your city group.
- ii. Self-control was also very popular with the Stoics in 2 Peter’s day. (Interestingly it is the biggest boogey word in our culture today). It was the Stoic thing to restrain themselves from pleasure so as to live what they thought would lead to a flourishing life. But here’s the thing, if you try to practice self-restraint solely fueled by will power and on the merit of your own self, you will fail. Stoics, although desiring to practice self-restraint, had men like Marcus Aurelius to who persecuted and killed lots of Christians through zealous military campaigns. Stoics for all their desire to have self-restraint always lived in the elite class in lives of luxury. They owned a bunch of slaves and as was the norm, had sex with them. That’s what self-control in the power of the flesh looks like. The divine nature instead gives us the ability to restrain from evil as defined by God (not by our own definition) and then receive freedom to pursue what is good.
- d. Among virtue and knowledge and self-control we eagerly add [**Steadfastness**]. Steadfastness can also be said to be perseverance. It’s the idea that we will hope in God regardless of the circumstances. The idea here is that God is good regardless of how it seems life is going; to remain steadfast in expecting God to help you. Steadfastness is part of hoping. In other words, always be hoping. This is the middle attribute on this list and I think it links up to 1 Corinthians 13 quite well. It creates Faith as the foundation, hope or steadfastness as a central link to the later trait of love that caps off all of these traits. Faith, hope, love.
 - i. How can we be zealous about hope? A lot of hope in the Bible is based off of the history of what God has already done for an individual. God is always reminding Israel of how He rescued them. It’s not wishful-thinking. Do not remain wishfully thinking things are going to work out. The Bible never asks that of us. Instead, if we take a moment to realize everything God has done, and then say, yes God will do it again. For example, take a moment and realize that God has provided for New City’s budget for 15 years! Not just 9 months. New City didn’t have the funds for this budget on day one. Yet, here we are 15 years later. Therefore, we have hope in God because of what He’s done and I eagerly remind myself of this when it doesn’t look like the budget will be met.

- ii. The world's version of steadfastness is usually wishful thinking aimed at an impersonal universe; our steadfastness is hope in the living God who has already rescued us. The main reason I lost employees was when they applied for 2 or 3 jobs and didn't get the job. It was a clear sign that they weren't going anywhere in the company and so they would leave because they lost hope in the company. Participating in the divine nature means our minds wake up thinking about Jesus, and what He's done and His promise that we will never leave us, and we continually tell ourselves this truth despite how we might feel.
- e. Among virtue, knowledge, self-control, and steadfastness we add [**godliness**]. Godliness is that reverential attitude that accompanies the works we do before God. It is the devotion to God. Godliness allows us to partake in the life of God, and that kind of makes a lot of sense. It's very devotional to try and imitate the God we worship as much as possible. So be eager to participate with God in being godly.
 - i. How do we do this? How do we increase our godliness? Engage in holy activities as much as possible. God says He is holy and that we ought to be holy like him. Holiness immediately creates a sense of reverence towards God and requires that we start being like Him because He is the only holy, holy, holy One. Holy actions include doing what we do at church; it includes following God's nature into every interaction we have with people at work, at school, on the street, on the internet.
 - ii. The world has a bunch of gods that they imitate (whether or not those gods are getting credit for the way people act is irrelevant). Peter is dealing with people who he calls ungodly and are influencing the church with their ungodliness, and thus teaching ungodly behavior. At workplace, it's really, really easy to spread negativity, and a whole lot of work to spread positivity towards your job. Ungodliness spreads easy, and therefore is all the more important for Peter make this effort to write this to his churches to remind them of their need to be godly. It is how we partake in the divine nature, go partake of it! Spread that; be zealous for godliness! Godliness in every part of life!
- f. Among virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, and godliness we add [**brotherly affection**]. The word is φιλαδελφία. This is very much the idea that the church should love the church. It is what Jesus says, when He says that the world will know us Christians by how we love each other. The church loving the church is explicitly expressed as the divine nature when Jesus says "as I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).
 - i. How do we do this? Serve the church for the benefit of the people in the church. Pray for the people in the church. Be kind to those who profess

faith in Jesus. Romans 12:10 says to do this brotherly affection by competing to show honor to one another. Extend kindness to those Dutch wooden shoes, without ridicule even if it's not your thing.

- ii. The world loves to counterfeit through false identity markers that they make up and then give us to wear as the most important part of our identity. Instead brotherly-affection breaks down all barriers because there is neither slave or free, male or female, Jew or Greek in Christ. Yes, there are actual slaves and free persons, actual males and females, actual Jews and Greeks, those identifiers don't go away, but they all submit to Jesus and can share in the divine nature equally.
- g. Among virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness and brotherly affection, we cap everything off with [love]. Love is the capstone of this list and all six of these things culminate to love. Of course, God is love. So when we add love we are adding one of the very few nouns that describes God. The bible says God is Spirit, God is Light and then it says God is love twice.
 - i. How do we add love to the life we lead? Pray and ask God to help you love people. Sometimes I think we assume we're all just naturally going to love each other, and sometimes that happens, but practically speaking- just ask God to help you love others. Be zealous to ask Him to love the people around you and the people you struggle being around.
 - ii. The world of course loves to claim to be champions of love, but how can you love anything if you reject God who is love? God loves His enemies. The world does not love their enemies. This is why we say that Christian love is unique, because it sacrifices the self even for those who are seeking to destroy us. That school or company is not going to shut down for a week just because you need to travel to attend a funeral. That company isn't going to stop conducting business and visit you in the hospital when you have surgery. But God will be with you during that funeral, in that hospital room. We can be there with each other, and communicate God's nature to each other as we partake in love.
- 7. There's a lot here in application, my hope today is that The Spirit lights the flame of desire to increase the qualities He's already given to us.