

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Applying the Tests of Living Faith Properly 2 Peter 1:1-11

We have completed our study of the Epistle of James. Why did James write this epistle? James wrote this epistle to call professing believers to examine their faith to make sure it was a living faith. He wrote this epistle to call professing believers to examine their faith to make sure it was a saving faith. He wrote this epistle to make sure, as far as it depended upon him, that no one would ever stand before Jesus and hear the words “I never knew you, depart from me you workers of iniquity.”

James provided a series of tests to help us in that examination. Hopefully you remember those tests. There was the “Response to Trials test” in James 1:2-18. There was the “Response to the Word test” in James 1:19-27. There was the “Impartiality test” in James 2:1-13. There was the “Works test” in James 2:14-26. There was the “Speech test” in James 3:1-12. There was the “Wisdom test” in James 3:13-18. There was the “Friendship with the World test” in James 4:1-5:12. And finally there was the “Prayer test” in James 5:13-18.

These are extremely important tests and we need to use them in evaluating the genuineness of our faith. But there may be some confusion as to exactly how these tests should be used in that evaluation. Do we have to see these various qualities represented in these tests of living faith perfectly manifested in our lives in order to have our faith confirmed? And the answer is, no. If this were so, then none of us would have our faith confirmed. Why? What do the Scriptures teach us? **“For we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** We do not need to see the perfection of these qualities but we do need to see the presence of these qualities in our lives if our faith is going to be confirmed.

Should we be satisfied with simply identifying the presence of these qualities in our lives to whatever degree we find them, as we apply these various tests of living faith? And my answer to you would be no, we should not be satisfied. The stakes are just too high. There is another factor that needs to be considered as we examine our lives in respect to the tests of living faith.

As we strive to confirm our faith as living and genuine, we should not only make sure that the qualities represented by the various tests of living faith in James can be seen in our lives to some greater or lesser degree, but that they are also increasing.

This factor is not highlighted for us in the Epistle of James but it is highlighted in the Epistle of First Peter. Let us turn in our Bibles to **2 Peter 1:1-11**, **“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: (2) Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; (3) seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (4) For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**

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(5) Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; (6) And in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; (7) and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. (8) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted having forgotten his purification from his former sins. (10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble’ (11) For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.” Peter in this epistle is emphasizing the knowledge of God. The word “know” or “knowledge” is used at least thirteen times in this short epistle, five times in the passage that we have just read. The word does not mean a mere intellectual understanding of some truth although that is included. It means a living participation in the truth. This is what Peter is emphasizing. He is not concerned with what we think, or what we say, he is interested in what we are really experiencing in respect to knowing God. Are we truly born again? Do we really possess genuine, living, saving faith?

Because of time restraints I will not attempt to explain to you every word and phrase and how these words and phrases relate to one another. But rather I will briefly point out a stated truth and hopefully string these truths together in such a way that I will be able to effectively accomplish the objective of this message.

This particular section of Scripture is a description of the Christian life. When he gets to chapter 2 he will be talking about the counterfeits. But here, he is talking about Christians and what Christians should expect if their profession of faith is in fact genuine, living, and saving. In other words he is basically doing the very same thing in these very few verses that James did throughout the entire Epistle of James.

My hope for us in briefly exploring this passage is to bring greater clarity on how the “Tests of Living Faith” in the Epistle of James should be applied. Hopefully we will come to understand that it is not enough for us to see the qualities represented by the various “Tests of Living Faith” present in our lives to some greater or lesser degree but that those qualities should also be seen as increasing. And with this clarification my prayer would be that all genuinely born again believers in our congregation would be fully assured that their faith is indeed living. And all those who are not genuinely born again would see their profession of faith as dead. My hope and prayer is that everyone here this weekend would be able, on the basis of God’s word to know where they stand with God..... What do we learn from 2 Pet. 1:1-11?

First of all we learn that the Christian life begins with faith (2 Pet. 1:1-4).

Read V. 1, “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours” Peter is viewing his readers as possessing the same kind of faith as he possesses a faith that is living and saving.

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This faith is in the person of Christ (VV. 1-2). **“Simon Peter, a bondservant and Apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (2) Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”** Peter and his readers, by acknowledging that Jesus was their God and Savior in V. 1 clearly communicate to us that they had placed their faith in Jesus as their God and Savior and that through Him, the grace and peace that they had already received could be multiplied. The Christian life begins with faith. This faith is in the person of Christ. What else do we see in this passage?

This faith involves God’s power (V. 3). Look at V. 3 **“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”** The Christian life begins with saving faith, faith in the person of Jesus Christ. But when we know Jesus personally, we also experience God’s power, and this power gives us everything pertaining to “life and godliness.”

Some people like to view themselves as victims, but in Christ we are victors because Jesus won the victory over sin and death. We have also won that same victory in Him. What does the verse say? We have received **“everything pertaining to life and godliness.”** This same truth is reiterated for us in **Col. 2:10 “We are complete in Him.”** This is not talking to a few super saints. He is speaking in these two Epistles to all the saints, whether they have just accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior or whether they have been a Christian 50 years. A professing believer who professes genuine, living, saving faith lacks nothing. He is not a victim, but a victor. This has tremendous implications not only for our present but for our future which Peter now emphasizes. This faith that we begin in the Christian life with not only involves faith in the person of Christ, not only involves God’s power, but it also involves God’s promises.

This faith involves God’s promises (V. 4). What can those who have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness expect? Let us read V. 4 **“For by these (His own glory and excellence) He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”** We have not been born again by faith in Christ and given everything pertaining to life and godliness to stay as we are.

What does **Rom. 8:29** tell us, **“For whom he foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”** We are glory bound and we are destined to be conformed to the image of Christ.

We have not been born again by faith in Christ and given everything pertaining to life and godliness to stay as we are. So here we are in this building today imperfect, but we will not remain this way. We have a glorious destiny. And this hope of being conformed to the image of Christ has been fixed on us according to **1 John 3:2-3, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

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The very first thing that we learned in **2 Pet. 1:1-11** is that the Christian life begins with faith in VV. 1-4. And as we have discussed what that faith involves, we come very naturally to the second thing we learn from **2 Pet. 1:1-11**. We learn that faith will motivate us to pursue Christlikeness.

Faith will motivate us to pursue Christlikeness (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Let us read **2 Pet. 1:5-7**, “**Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; (6) and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; (7) and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.**” Peter says, “**Now for this very reason also.**” What reason? The reason why we have been given His precious and magnificent promises. And what was that reason? That we might be partakers of the divine nature. We were dead in trespasses and sins but now we are alive and destined for glory. And that upward call Peter assumes will result in us applying all diligence. “**Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence.**” If his readers enjoy a faith as he has described it in VV. 1-4 then he assumes that they will “**apply all diligence**” to pursue the seven qualities that he lists. A living and saving faith will motivate believers to pursue Christlikeness.

Babies when they are born will not be satisfied to remain as they are. They have in a sense “a calling.” They want to mature and to grow and to become everything that they are destined to be by their nature. And the same thing is true of us when we are spiritually born. We are given a new nature and it has a glorious destiny. And it will not be satisfied until that destiny is achieved.

When we understand the grace that is brought to us through Christ through these precious and magnificent promises and become a partaker of the divine nature it is only natural that we will be motivated to pursue Christlikeness, our faith will not allow us to do otherwise. This brings us to the third thing that we learn from **2 Pet. 1:1-11**. Faith will produce results.

Faith will produce results (2 Pet. 1:8-11)

First of all faith will produce fruitfulness (VV. 8-9) Let us read **2 Pet. 1:8-11**, “**For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.**” Now it is interesting to note what Peter says here.

He says, “**if these qualities are yours and increasing.**” Peter is assuming that we will not remain static. He assumes that there will be spiritual growth in our lives. When we see an infant struggling to become all that he is by virtue of his birth do we assume that the qualities that he is struggling to develop will actually develop? And the answer is, yes. If faith is present and it is genuine and living, if faith is present and involves all the things that we have talked about in **VV. 1-4**, it will not only motivate us to pursue Christlikeness as we see in **VV. 5-7** but it will also produce according to **V. 8** Christlike qualities that are increasing.

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How important is it that these qualities successfully develop in our lives so that they are clearly seen by ourselves and others? Read **V. 9** **“For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.”** Notice the strong language that Peter uses. Peter calls these people lacking these qualities “blind” which sounds very similar to the term “sinner” that James used in his epistle to describe those who were professing believers but who had strayed from the truth.

Faith will produce assurance (VV. 10-11). Let us read **VV. 10-11**, **“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”** Why is this so important to Peter? The assurance of their eternal salvation is at stake.

CONCLUSION

The Scriptures encourage us to examine our faith. We have spent over two years looking at various “Tests of Living Faith” in the Epistle of James. Hopefully as you examined your faith in light of those tests you found that your faith has been confirmed. Hopefully you have found the various qualities represented in these tests present in your life to some greater or lesser degree. And if you have found those qualities in your life, praise the Lord!

But because the stakes are so high I believe it is not sufficient for us simply to look for the qualities highlighted in the Book of James as “Tests of Living Faith”. I believe it is also important for us to see those qualities as increasing in our lives based on **1 Pet 1:1-11**.

So now let us go back to James and see how you are doing. Are you, because of your faith in Christ and your desire to become more like Him, seeking to count it all joy when you fall into various trials and are you seeing progress in that area? Are you, because of your faith in Christ and your desire to become more like Him seeking to be a doer of the Word and do you see that desire increasing? Are you, because of your faith in Christ and your desire to become more like Him seeking to look on others as Christ looks on them and are you seeing progress in that area? If you can examine each of these tests and not only see them present, but increasing, my you are in good shape!! And if you were suddenly to face your mortality and were standing at death’s door, I would expect you to speak these words.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; (8) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”