

## Symphony of Grace Essay

With the knowledge that his own death was near, the Apostle Peter writes what he must have considered to be his last general letter to the churches. Like a good father who desires to share his most precious wisdom to his beloved children, he wants this letter to serve beyond his death as a means to 'stir up their minds' in some important things. But Peter is not just an older man who has some life-learned lessons to share (as any competent aging person would have), nor has he some clever man-made myths or folksy wisdom to pass on. Rather, what Peter has to share comes from the most cosmic changing force that man has ever encountered; a force so strong that it has blotted out the effects of the former greatest cosmic force, the one where mankind became corrupted through the sin of one man. Peter knows firsthand of this, for he knows of Jesus' power and of His coming into the world. He was an eyewitness to Jesus' life and in particular he was present on the 'holy mount' where Jesus, the Son of Man was transfigured into radiant glory as the Son of God and Peter himself heard the Majestic Glory of the Father speak and say "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased".

So let us be attentive to what Peter wants to share. His letter comes in two parts, the first is a list of things that need to be practiced in order to make one's calling and election sure, and his second focus is on two things that are diversions from these practices: false teachings and teachers, and being disheartened in waiting for the final completion in the coming day of the Lord.

It is the former things regarding the practices of assuring one's calling that is of primary importance for by them we are able to navigate past the latter things. Therefore, let's allow Peter to 'stir us up' even today as he so desired.

### Foundation of Truth

However, before Peter gave the particulars in his letter about what a believer should practice to assure their calling, he first reminded them of the foundation of truths that these practices are being laid upon:

1. All believers have obtained the same precious faith as an Apostle (that is one who is an eye-witness to Jesus), for it comes by and is based on the righteousness of Jesus Christ
2. Knowledge of Jesus is meant to lead to multiplying grace and peace.
3. God's divine power has given us all the things we need for life and godliness
4. We are called (and attracted to) the glory and virtue of Jesus Christ
5. Exceedingly great and precious promises have been bestowed to us so that through them (by faith and practice) we:
  - a. Partake in the divine nature
  - b. Escape the corruption that is in the world through lust

What are these precious and magnificent promises?

- eternal life and an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade (1 Peter 1:3-5)
- The saving of our souls and the grace we receive when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:9,13)
- The promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 23:49 “clothed with power from on high”, John 14:26 the Comforter who will teach and remind us)
- Communion with God (John 14:20)

### **Practice of Grace**

So let's move to the things that we are to 'diligently practice', which Peter describes as a linked progression of qualities or virtues in a beautiful paragraph; one that Kenneth Gangel calls a “symphony of grace”, where “to the melody line of faith... believers [are led] to add harmony in a blend of seven Christian virtues.<sup>1</sup>” With all these parts playing in a believer's life, Peter says a person will not be barren but will be fruitful in their faith, and thereby not become so nearsighted that he is blind and forgets that he was cleansed from his old sins. Elsewhere in scripture, this may be finding oneself unprepared for the great unveiling of the world to come upon Jesus' return.

The operative word<sup>2</sup> in this progression of qualities is 'to supplement', or 'to assist', 'to minister to', 'to furnish' or 'to supply abundantly'. Regardless of the preferred expression, it is to be done in earnestness and diligence.

Now we can move to the particular qualities in this progression; which starts with 'faith'; the 'melody line' and this would be the most appropriate gift to begin with, for by it all things become possible and mountains can be tossed into the sea. Is not the presence of this grace what Jesus was first trying to draw out from his own people, but astonishingly it seemed to be more readily found among the outsiders and outcasts? Peter then tells us to diligently fortify this faith with virtue or to practice moral goodness, and then to supplement virtue with knowledge. At this first crescendo, we are given and are to be using a set of graces that pulls us out of the deepest darkness of despair and to know that all is not vanity, and to gain assurance over doubt. Peter then says to supply self-control to this knowledge, and to furnish self-control with steadfastness, and to reinforce steadfastness with godliness. At this second crescendo, we are given and are to be using a set of graces that brings hope and have learned discernment and trust that God is good, reliable and provides for every need. Peter then says that to godliness we administer brotherly-love, and finally to brotherly-love we abundantly provide selfless love, or agape, the one outstanding debt. With this final crescendo, we have reached the full measure of faith and grace that marks us as God's children, born into the light and there being no darkness within them. For God is love, and there is no darkness within Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, J. and Zuck, R Eds. 1983 *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition*, p 865 [Gangel is attributed as author of the section on 2 Peter]

<sup>2</sup> The Greek transliterated word is *epichoregeo*; derived from *choregos* refers to a choirmaster who is responsible for paying and supplying the needs of a Greek state established choir, and to produce performances in cooperation with the poet and state. Possibly this is the source to Gangel's inspiration to describe the passage as a 'symphony of grace'.