

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: AN ABUNDANT ENTRANCE

Scripture: II Peter 1:5-11

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the preceding sermons of this series we have stressed the idea that salvation is by grace through faith --not by works: that works are a necessary and indispensable sign of salvation: that works form the basis of our reward. We have said that men are saved by faith, through the grace of God; but that they are rewarded according to their works; that justification by faith is the beginning, but not the end or the goal of Christian life; that works cannot save, but saved men must work; that Jesus paid it all but did not do it all. Today's sermon is in some respects an extension and amplification of these thoughts.

Peter has no quarrel with faith. His argument in the first chapter of his second epistle (from which we have already read) may be paraphrased something like this: Because God has already done so much for you, has made so much available to you through faith, you must not let him down; you must do your utmost to respond. He has freely given us everything that is necessary for living the good life. Through Christ, God's greatest and most precious promises have been made available to our faith. Therefore, for this very reason, your gratitude will make you respond to God's gift and promises and opportunities by giving all diligence, by supplying to God's abundance your own effort, in order that there may be a super-abundance. You must add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to tem-

perance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness charity. The original Greek of this phrase "Add to your faith" conveys the idea of providing abundantly, or exceptionally generously--of anticipating and providing for every possible need. The Emphatic Greek Diaglott translation reads: "Using all diligence, super-add to your faith..." etc. The things which are to be generously supplied or super-abundantly added to faith are the tools which faith needs for its proper expression and implementation.

A rather careful study of this passage has convinced your speaker that Peter did not simply put down at random the things to be added to your faith, but that he deliberately chose their order. The opinion is strengthened by several of the modern translations which differ somewhat from the familiar King James. The American Revised, for example, says "In your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue knowledge," etc. Moffatt says: "Furnish your faith with resolution." Weymouth's translation reads: "With (marginal note says 'or in') your faith exhibit also a noble character." The Revised Standard says: "Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue...." etc.

Faith, if it is genuine, live, and real, should result in virtue, goodness, and nobility of character. A living faith brings a new life -- the life of Jesus, the indwelling of his Spirit; and this

new life destroys the corruption of the old. It takes away the love of sinning and make us hate the things we once loved, and love the things we once hated. If it doesn't do this, our faith is dead. Proper faith must result in virtue.

The virtue which is added to our faith demands knowledge. The desire to do right cannot be implemented unless we know what right is. No one can continue in virtue unless he has a knowledge of what virtue is. No one can be virtuous unless he has knowledge of the difference between good and evil, and sometimes more important -- the difference between good, better, and best. It takes knowledge to choose the actions which will develop and perfect a virtuous, fruitful life.

Next there is need to add to knowledge temperance, or self control. Knowledge of what one should do is no guarantee that one will do it. The man with faith, virtue, and knowledge needs to add to these the quality of self-restraint, self-discipline, self-control. The old man of sin does not die without a struggle. It may take years -- or even a lifetime -- to get rid of him completely. In the meantime, one must exercise self-restraint, self-discipline, self-control, or temperance. He must use this self control to make sure that his actions agree with his knowledge.

In this process of self-discipline or self control, one needs patience. Perfection is not achieved in one choice, or at one fell swoop, but after many years of many choices. Several modern translations substitute for the word "patience" such words as "steadfastness," or "endurance." He that is steadfast, he that endures to the end, shall be saved -- not he who makes a good start and then quits.

To our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and patience, we must then add godliness, or piety, or godly devotion, or trust in God. Godliness results from the accumulation and exercise of these foregoing qualities. We should never lose sight of the fact that it is God who has made all this process possible by rewarding our faith -- that he has done for us in Jesus Christ what we could not possibly have done for ourselves.

To our godliness then there should be added brotherly kindness -- a regard

for all of our brothers in Christ, who like ourselves are members of the household of faith. If God has done so much for us, has forgiven us so much, we should deal kindly, patiently, lovingly, and forgivingly with others who like ourselves are striving to add to their lives the tools that make faith fruitful and worth while.

But loving our brethren is not sufficient. The new man in Christ Jesus should add to his brotherly kindness the charity which is all-inclusive -- the charity which is the pure love of Christ that includes all men and invites all men to share it.

If any man lacks these things which need to be added to his faith, Peter says that he is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. He is spiritually, not physically blind. He is short-sighted because in spite of his faith he blinks his eyes, squints to keep out the lights, and turns from the light to his old ways of darkness.

He who says that he has faith, and that his faith has saved him, must therefore "endorse by his conduct" as the J.B. Phillips translation says, the fact that God has called and chosen him. If he has thus been called and chosen, certainly he is all the more to be blamed if his character and conduct do not give proof of such a call and such a salvation. If he tries to claim that he is a "saved" man, and does not exhibit the life that should follow such salvation, he is either not saved at all, or just barely saved; he is in constant danger of stumbling and falling, and losing even the salvation which he has, as many of Israel who were saved from Egypt lost that salvation through disobedience, and died in the wilderness. But if he adds to his faith the things enumerated by Peter, he will be worthy of an abundant entrance, a triumphant admission into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What have you added to your faith? Will you just barely squeeze through the gates of the kingdom to be saved from the second death, but saved with little or no reward for the deeds done in the flesh, or will you be richly provided with those qualities of life that will entitle you to an abundant entrance?