

Ricky Lee
Grace Community Church
1 Peter 1:3-11 - Give Yourself Up To Godliness
January 3, 2016

WELCOME

Good morning. I'm grateful that you have chosen to come and worship with us today at Grace. We are a people who are seeking the Lord together daily in our lives and we are grateful that we get to gather weekly in our worship gatherings to hear what he is teaching us through the reading of his Word.

As we begin the new year, I hope you will consider visiting a home group or two and choose to commit to one. We as a church commit to you when you become a member and we ask that you too commit to us. As a member, the elders are responsible and committed to your discipleship and they have put a plan of sermon-based small groups in place to aid in your discipleship. So consider home groups as you are making changes and plans for 2016. You can find a list of our home groups on our website and on a sheet of paper in the Welcome Room.

I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of 2 Peter. We are going to be looking at 2 Peter 1:3-11 this morning. As you turn there, I want you to consider what you plan to make happen this year. I'm sure you have already been thinking about it and most of you have already decided on your 2016 goals. Maybe you began a diet Friday morning, you messed up late Friday night and decided you'll just start Monday.

Whatever it is you are planning to make happen this year, I'm sure it will have to be something you work for. Goals aren't normally accidentally accomplished. I personally have never accidentally lost weight over the course of a year. I have never had a year pass where I have asked, "Hmm, did I just read the entire Bible through?" Most goals aren't accidentally met, but they have to be worked for.

But what about when it comes to the Christian life? Do you have to work to live a godly life? Or does a godly life only come about through God's work in you? Can our effort and the Holy Spirit

exist together? This is the question we are wrestling with this morning and I can assure you they do exist together. Let's begin this morning by standing as we read through God's Word together.

2 PETER 1:3-11

3: His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4: by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

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.

PRAY: Lord, we are a feeble people coming to you this morning, asking that you will help us believe and rest in the fact that what is required for our salvation has already been accomplished through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Give us faith to believe. Give us grace to obey. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.

GIVE UP

If you are to receive something in this world, rarely is it given freely. Our lives are spent earning. Earning money for food, shelter, clothing. Earning favor from others for love, acceptance, and companionship.

Many of you are not ready to begin this new year that has already begun. You can't seem to muster up enough strength, enough will-power, enough concern to continue to work through another year. Aren't you tired? Are you tired of working, working, working? If this is you, then I have good news for you today. If I can tell you one thing to give you hope as you begin your journey this new year, it's this: There is rest for the weary. You are worshiping with a feeble people who are living examples of God loving the undeserving. Just as my children live not even realizing all that April and I provide for them, I want us as a church to live so dependently on the Lord that we contently forget there is any other way.

Now this rest I speak of is not an immobile rest. No, it's a rest that works contently and joyfully. That may sound like an oxymoron to you; rest and work. Rest for me can be untying knots, but for some of you it's work. Rest for April is doing a crossword puzzle, but it's work for me. It's all about your perspective and purpose for the work you are doing that determines if it's rest or work for you. As you begin this new year, I'm praying your work will turn into rest. I'm asking you to give up. You may ask, what kind of New Year's message is this? I'm asking you to give yourself up.

We have a Father who gives good gifts, but many of us are too prideful to admit we need what he offers. Have you known someone who is too proud to accept a gift they need? We're a prideful people. God uses his power to give his children all they need. No more working to earn, faking to impress, and no more expectations to be met. Why? God loves those who show up and say, "I can do no more but fall on my knees and give up. I'm tired, I'm weary, I'm incapable, and I'm unloveable." If these are your thoughts, then I have good news for you today. You may feel defeated, but you are closer to victory than you have ever been before.

However, some of you would rather work because life is good...for the moment. If this is you, you will eventually figure out that you don't have all that it takes to be all that you can be and live your best life now. This is the message of our culture: to give it your best shot and stay true to yourself and it will all work out in the end. But that's not what God says. God says your best intentions won't cut it. That's not good enough. The standard is not your best, but perfection. Listen, you are not good enough for God until Jesus is enough for you. Only Jesus is perfect and only he will do when it comes to pleasing God.

Let's begin the year owning our needs, our failures, and our inabilities. This means you no longer look for others to blame, you no longer hide behind your unfair lot in life, and that you stop giving excuses. God wants you to stop trying to impress him, surrender, and enjoy what he has for you.

Let's begin the new year accepting that we have issues and are in need of saving. We need a Savior and we just celebrated that he has come! He won't leave you broken and alone if you cry out to him. There is rest for the weary. You are precious to him. This is the good news of the gospel.

BE GODLY (3-4)

Let's read verse 3.

v. 3: His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

Here's what I want for us in 2016, the same thing Peter was calling the people to: live a life of godliness — to mature spiritually. I wanted to be sure we talk about resting in 2016 before we talk about being godly in 2016. The reason is that if I were to say, "let's be a godly people in 2016" and spend all of our time on that, you might leave here, hit the ground running, and be devastated by the time you reach the end of Harnett Central Road. You can't be godly in your own power.

This is why we have to constantly remind ourselves of our need of God: we forget! If we don't, then we think that we can be godly on our own. In pursuing godliness, we end up making the law (our good works) the goal and thinking it's attainable. We are then devastated when we keep messing up. You and I cannot be godly in our own power.

You may be wondering, "Okay, Ricky. So you're saying to make godliness my resolution for 2016, but you're telling me it's not possible?" Exactly, in your own power. So then, how can we be godly as Peter calls us to be? Through God's divine power. Now listen closely; this is dense stuff here. Peter did not take it lightly with his words. There is a lot packed in here.

God's divine power gives you life and godliness. How though? How do you receive this power of God that gives life and godliness? **It's through the knowledge of him who calls.** This call is not just a call of invitation where you decide to respond or not. In our thinking today, you don't "have" to answer to anyone if you don't want to, but this is not the type of call the author has in mind. When God calls, you answer! This call is an effectual call, meaning it awakens and creates faith.

The means of godliness is already yours if you have been awakened to respond in faith to the call of God! Remember? All things have been granted to his children! This awakening to faith is an act of grace. Humanity is running away from God. Can you honestly watch what's happening in the world and tell me that people are running to God, begging for him? No way! They defy God. but he graciously calls some to himself, saving them and giving them all things required for life and godliness. It's adoption. It's beautiful. It's grace.

To what has he called us? To himself; **to his own glory and excellence.** Do you feel down and alone? Some of you this morning feel that you go through year after year unnoticed. That's not true, not true if he is calling you to see his excellence and glory. He has sought and chosen you. He wants you to respond to him. You are who he desires. You haven't gone unnoticed by Jesus.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...Verse 4.

v. 4: by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Because God is of great glory and excellence, there are **precious and great promises**. And to think I was excited about the pocket knife I received this Christmas! We have the precious and very great promises of God! What are these promises? There are many that are ours through Christ. Ultimately salvation. I have no doubt here that these precious and very great promises are not just for the future though. You don't have to wait until the next Christmas. They're for his children...now!

There is an "already, but not yet" aspect to these promises. As Christians, we have the promise of being delivered from the power of sin, but we still struggle with sin. I do. Don't you? We enjoy this partially now, but not completely yet.

An article in the ESV Study Bible entitled, *God's Plan for Salvation* says, "Christians have been saved from the *penalty* of our sins; we are currently being saved from the *power* of sin; and one day, when God's plan of salvation is completed and we are with Christ, we shall be like him, and we shall be saved even from the very *presence* of sin." These precious and very great promises are already, but not yet.

These promises are many, ultimately leading to our salvation that has begun and will be completed. Through these promises, **we are becoming partakers of the divine nature**. Once again, talking about good gifts? How quickly we get bummed Christmas morning because all of the presents have all been opened! As children of God, he has plans for us! The gifts never end!

This becoming a "partaker of the divine nature" happens as you grow in spiritual maturity, which characterizes a child of God. Taking on the divine nature doesn't mean you are deified; you don't become God. It means you share in his holiness, not his being.

As you are taking on the divine nature, you are simultaneously **escaping the corruption of the world caused by sinful desire**. Man, I don't know about you, but I'm sick and tired of the

corruption in the world because of sinful desires. The thing is, it's not just what I see on the outside as I look at others, but what I also see on the inside as I look within. Christians are grieved by sins of others, but even more so by our own sins. This is because those who have come to know Jesus Christ have had their desires transformed. Christians love goodness and holiness, whereas those ensnared in the world love what is evil.

Okay, listen closely before we move on to verse 5. There is a transformation from worldliness to godliness that takes place in the heart of a Christian. This transformation comes by the power of God, awakening in us a knowledge of his call to faith. Then, trusting in the precious and great promises of God, we partake in his divine nature. In partaking of his divine nature, we say "so long" to our sinful desires, escaping the corruption of this world and sharing in his divine godliness. What a glorious transformation? What a glorious God?

I want you to consider beginning the new year by doing this, right now at the beginning of this new year's race, as a child would do: collapse in the arms of Jesus in humble dependence, admitting that you are powerless on your own and trusting that he's got it. You no longer have to please God to earn his favor, to have his ear, or to catch his eye. Jesus has come to you and is waiting for you to give up and fall into his arms so that he can make you godly. We are his and he loves to see his children marvel in the gifts he gives. He wants us to stop hiding from him. He wants us to trust him and contently enjoy his gifts.

Being empowered by God, let's resolve to be a godly people in 2016 who rest in the grace of God by stumbling forward to Jesus...together. The next time you let someone down and are crushed to learn again that you aren't perfect, collapse in Jesus' arms. The next time you are disappointed in someone else because they aren't perfect, collapse in Jesus' arms. The next time you see or feel unbearable pain, being reminded that this world is corrupt, collapse into the assuring arms of Jesus; knowing he's not shaken or surprised, but trusting that he's got it. His power provides his children all things pertaining to life and godliness and he will not let you down.

Knowing that God provides the power for life and godliness, let's move on to verses 5-7.

MAKE EVERY EFFORT (5-7)

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.

We know that God provides what is needed for life and godliness. This power is in the life of every believer through the Holy Spirit. Let me remind you once again that he graciously gives what he requires. So now what? Is that it? You have power and you're holy? All done, you're complete. Just exist being holy. Well, not quite.

This is not an easy passage. Are we made holy through the work of the Holy Spirit or through our good works? Well, it's clear that the God supplies the power for godliness, and it is also clear that we are responsible to live godly lives.

For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith**. Let me just say again in case you're sweating having faith, that he even provides the faith that's needed! Just ask! Because God makes all provision, we are to seek spiritual maturity. In fact, Peter says to make every effort. This is important, so much so that Peter is saying, "Let's get after it." Be eager, zealous, diligent. Since God has made provision for godliness, be godly.

Supplement your faith with virtue. This virtue is goodness and can even be translated as moral excellence. It's actually the same word we see in verse 3 in talking about God's excellence. Because he is morally excellent, his children are to be as well. **And your virtue with knowledge.** This knowledge is not the same word we saw in verse 3, which refers to the knowledge of his call. This knowledge speaks to knowing God's will, his ways, and making God-glorifying decisions. **And knowledge with self-control.** Knowing God's will, Christians should know when to say no to temptations and call sin what it is: sin. It's not going to make you popular, but it'll make you godly.

Self-control with steadfastness, endurance. Christians stand firm amidst trials. We aren't surprised when suffering comes, but we willingly accept it so that we can know more of the

sufferings of Christ. **We are steadfast with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.**

Being empowered by God, let's be a godly people in 2016 who resolve to make every effort to pursue virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. While God has already granted us the power to do so (Remember? All things.), it is clear that we have a responsibility to use this power and work at becoming a people who please God in every phase of our life.

Now, if you are sitting there and hearing me say, "Muster up the strength, figure it out, shape up or ship out," then you aren't seeing the glorious heart of God. Let's move on to verses 8 and 9.

DON'T FORGET (8-9)

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.

Going back to verse 3, God is saying, "All things need for life and godliness are yours already; you possess them. You are mine and as my child you have the Holy Spirit implanted inside of you. Your closet is stocked with all that you need to be a part of this family."

But God has not called us into his family to be an idle people who are just content with faith alone. God's plan for his people is so much more than providing fire insurance. If you are content to be saved just so that you won't have to go to hell, then what is it you are looking forward to in heaven? Is Jesus your prize, or is it really yourself?

While it's important not to want to go to hell, James has a word for those who are content to just have faith. He says, "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). Christians have works because they are becoming partakers of the divine nature. They increase in

godliness. They show these qualities more and more as time passes, they are effective...they are fruitful.

Let's stop right here for a minute. The context of this passage is that Peter is warning the people of false teachers: those who claim to be Christians but don't live like it. There's no fruit, no evidence, no maturing. They say they partake of the divine nature and have been cleansed of their sins, but they still enjoy the corruption of the world and satisfy their sinful desires.

There is no partaking of the divine nature without also escaping sinful desires. Christians grow to hate their sin. Some of you here today may have purchased fire insurance without knowing the policy is only valid for those who are in the family. You don't want to be godly because you don't hate your sin. Instead, you hide your sin. You choose yourself over God. Christians are becoming partakers of the divine nature. They aren't who they are going to be, but they sure aren't who they once were either.

Some of you here today lack these qualities because you have forgotten what it means to be cleansed from your former sins. You are blinded. Maybe you have shut your eyes, choosing to blind yourself to the truth of the gospel. You claim to have had your sins forgiven, but you choose to be blind and willingly resist maturing spiritually. Peter gives his readers a stern warning about people who say their sins have been forgiven, but live ineffective and unfruitful lives. They are fake.

On the other hand, some of you are here today frustrated and are beating up on yourself. You may be living in frustration because you aren't able to live how God wants you to live. Maybe you don't have the power of the Holy Spirit. No wonder you're frustrated! You might as well try to turn on a light without it having power supplied to it as to try to become holy apart from the Holy Spirit. No wonder you're frustrated!

John Calvin says, "...with regard to those who feel in themselves the efficacious working of the Spirit, Peter bids them to take courage as to the future, because the Lord has laid in them the solid foundation of a true and sure calling." If you are the one saying, "I'm tired, I'm weary, I'm incapable, and I'm unloveable," then thank God you are admitting your inevitable defeat. The power of God is available to you if you'll give up. Give up yourself so that you can have Jesus.

Verses 10 & 11.

BE DILIGENT (10-11)

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.

Just as we are to make every effort, we are spurred on again to **be diligent in confirming our calling and election**. The elective call comes from God, and man's works prove or disprove it. This is a tough passage and it may seem like a contradiction, but it's not. It's an antinomy: truths that do not contradict but cannot be completely reconciled either.

Going back to the question we began with: Do you have to work to live a godly life? Or does a godly life just come about through God's work in you? How do effort and the Holy Spirit exist together? I agree with Douglas Moo, who says, "God elects, but I must believe. God preserves me until the end, but I must 'put to death the misdeeds of the body' if I hope to find eternal life (Rom. 8:13). Both are taught in Scripture, and we must affirm both if we are to remain biblical." Our effort confirms if we are truly a child of God.

If God is your father, then **you will never fall away**. This doesn't mean you will not ever sin, but that God doesn't bail on his children. He won't leave you for someone else, he won't change his mind, and he will not stand you up.

God richly **provides for his children**. Here we see it again. The grace of God. He loves to give to undeserving people who know they are undeserving an **entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. Because God is of great glory and excellence, there are precious and great promises; all things...granted to us that pertain to life and godliness.

As we close, I want to remind you all that we always have two church leaders out in the Welcome Room after the service. They are there to listen to you, pray with you, and answer your questions. I encourage you to stop by there this morning if you would like.

In 2016, being empowered by God, let's resolve to rest in the power of God, to make every effort, and to confirm our calling and election.

Okay? Let's pray.

PRAY: Lord, we ask that you will give us what we need for 2016. Give us the power to be godly, the humility to rest, the grace to make every effort, and the privilege to confirm our calling and election. It's in the name of Jesus we pray, amen.