

E ultreia e suseia, Deus adjuva nos
2 Peter 1:1-11

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See 2 Peter 3:17-18

Set the context of the passage before it is read

2 Peter was the last book in the New Testament to be written, probably between 65 and 68 AD. It was also the last book to gain entry into the New Testament. And it gained entry with the greatest difficulty.¹ A scholar described 2 Peter as: "... far inferior in every respect to 1 Peter ... it is the least valuable of the New Testament writings."² Although referred to in the 1st and second centuries it was apparently not until the fourth century that 2 Peter came to be accepted in the New Testament.

Many have challenged whether it was written by Peter because of the different style in the original writings. But whatever the debate we turn to 2 Peter 1 this morning.

The letter was written to counter the beliefs and activities of a group of people who were a threat to the Church.³ They were using God's grace as a justification for sinning. The first 11 verses reminded believers that through God's grace they had been forgiven their sins and instructed them how, grounded in faith, they were to journey onwards and upwards without falling. Listen to these verses.

Reading to be done.

Reading: 2 Peter 1:1-11

James Moffat wrote: "Christianity is not to be an initial spasm followed by chronic inertia".

Our coming into the Christian faith does not bring us to a destination: Heaven is the destination. Our destiny is to strive to lead a Christ like life. Our coming into the Christian faith brings us to the start of a journey. Our journey as a Christ follower.

And as I thought about this and read this passage what came to mind was:

"E ultreia e suseia, Deus adjuva nos".⁵

"Ever onwards and ever higher: God with us."

This is an ancient greeting used by pilgrims walking the Camino de Santiago⁶. Recorded in the Codex Calixtinus written in the 12th century.⁷

Sue and I had the privilege of walking some 900 kilometers on the ancient French route to Santiago in May this year.

A long walk like this mirrors our life's journey in many ways:

☀ It has a start and you know there will be an end;

¹ The Letters of Peter and James by William Barclay. My Kindle location 5628

² EF Scott quoted by William Barclay

³ William Barclay location 5635

⁴ Barclay (location 5645) says that "It is clear that Peter is describing antinomians, those who used God's grace as a justification for sinning. In all probability they were Gnostics, who said that only spirit was good and that matter was essentially evil and that, therefore, what we did with the body was not important and that we could follow physical appetites to excess and it made no difference.

⁵ For comment and discussion see: <http://santiagoinlove.com/en/ultreia-meaning/>

⁶ For more information see: <https://www.csjofsa.za.org/>

⁷ See: <https://caminoways.com/codex-calixtinus>

- ⊕ It is a journey but you do not know what lies ahead;
- ⊕ There will be joy and there will be pain
- ⊕ Good times and tough times;
- ⊕ Times when you feel you can walk forever, and times when you can't lift your backpack and you feel like you can't take another step.

Sometimes the way is clear and you have no difficulty in following the correct path. At other times it may be uncertain and wrong instruction can lead you astray. Sometimes the path is difficult and it is easy to stumble or fall.

Sometimes you walk alone and at other times you meet new friends like Carol, Andy, Karen, Jan and Anthony who bring company, encouragement, laughter and friendship. Fellow walkers along the way.

Walking a pilgrim route like this mirrors our journey as Christ followers.

I mentioned before we read this passage that it was written to believers who were slowing down or being led astray.

The passage gives instructive encouragement to keep us moving onwards and upwards. To keep us from falling.

I want to look at three questions:

1. Where does our faith come from?
2. What have we been given?
3. What are we to do and why?

As we look at these verses I want you to look first at the structure of the text and some of the words used.

You will see words or concepts repeated.

“through the righteousness”

“through the knowledge”

“through our knowledge

“Through these”

“through them”

Explaining how we have achieved something and how we are to journey on.

Explaining that our calling and what we may receive comes from:

“our God and Savior Jesus Christ”

“God and of Jesus our Lord”

“His divine power”

“his very great and precious promises”

“our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

And what we are to do and what will happen if we do:

“**For** this very reason, make every effort “

“ **For** if you possess”

“For if you do these things”

Where does our faith come from?

This was written to believers.

“To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.”

The gift of faith to us, not as a result of what we have done, but through “*the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus.*”

“Faith” here is not the body of truth to be believed but the act of believing – “the God-given capacity to trust Christ for salvation.”

And this is followed by a blessing:

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

Where does the abundant grace and peace come from?

“... through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

Then the passage explains what we have been given.

We read that we have been given:

“... everything we need for a godly life”

Who has given this and how has this been given? This has been given by God. Through His divine power. This has been given to us through the revealed knowledge of God's own glory and goodness. Through our calling.

Remember the readers of this letter were being influenced by those who used God's grace as a justification for sinning. Following the (antinomian) belief that took the principle of salvation by faith and divine grace to the point of saying that the saved are not bound to follow any moral law: they could follow physical appetites to excess and it made no difference.

And so there is a reminder of the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

What we have been given.

Through the gift of faith and our calling to be Christ followers we have been given:

“his very great and precious promises, so that through them we (you) may participate in the divine nature,”

Stop and consider this.

“Very great and precious promises, so that through them we (you) may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world.”

Participating "in the divine nature" does not mean that we become divine in any sense. It means that, remaining human, we may be indwelt by the Holy Spirit.⁸

The gift of faith from God.

Our calling.

From the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Through our knowledge of God.

What are we to do in response and why?

There is to be no chronic inertia after the coming to faith, the initial spasm.

We are to play our part.

William Barclay uses this analogy which is helpful.⁹ Imagine you were given a full bursary to register for a degree at the university of your choice. With all expenses of whatever nature fully paid. Would that mean that you have a degree, or that you will get one? Not at all. You would now need to apply yourself, attend classes, read, and study to play your part.

William Barclay puts this beautifully:

"The gracious free offer and the personal hard work have to combine before the privilege becomes fully effective. It is the same with us and God. God has called us in his free mercy and his unmerited grace, but at the same time we have to make every possible effort to toil upwards and onwards on the way."

"... to toil upwards and onwards on the way."

And this is what we now turn to in verse 5.

And here we see that we are urged (in response to what has been given us) to make every effort to journey further. To:

"add to your faith goodness;

and to goodness, knowledge;

6 and to knowledge, self-control;

and to self-control, perseverance;

and to perseverance, godliness;

7 and to godliness, mutual affection;

and to mutual affection, love.

It is put like this in the Message (a paraphrase into modern language), do this by:

complementing your basic faith with good character,

spiritual understanding,

⁸ NIV Study Bible footnote on page 1898 and John 14: 16-17: 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be[a] in you.

⁹ New Daily Study Bible: The Letters of Peter and James by William Barclay. My Kindle location 6042

alert discipline,
passionate patience,
reverent wonder,
warm friendliness,
and generous love,
each dimension fitting into and developing the others.

This does not mean that we must perfect each quality in order and then move on to the next on the list. We are to cultivate them simultaneously in increasing measure. But this needs to be intentional.

This is an active part for us to play.

Paul wrote this in Philippians¹⁰:

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed –...– continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his purpose.”

What does this mean?

A writer puts it like this: “[Psalm 2:11](#) sums it up perfectly:

“Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.”

We work out our salvation by going to the very source of our salvation—the Word of God—wherein we renew our hearts and minds ([Romans 12:1-2](#)), coming into His presence with a spirit of reverence and awe.¹¹

I understand that “work out” here means an ongoing continuous effort - "to continually work to bring something to completion or fruition."

Doing this is to become part of us. Something we do each day. On the Camino when you wake, you know you are going to put on your boots, pack your backpack and start walking. Whatever the weather and whether you feel like it or not.

There are days when moving onwards gets difficult, when you feel you can't lift your backpack and you can't take another step. And you need strength beyond yourself and the encouragement of those around you to say “Ultreia!” – “Ever onwards”. And you can respond: “Suseia” – ever upwards!

Having told us what we are to do we are now told why we are to do this.

¹⁰ [Philippians 2:12-13](#)

¹¹ The sense in which we are to work out our salvation in fear and trembling is twofold. First, the Greek verb rendered “work out” means “to continually work to bring something to completion or fruition.” We do this by actively pursuing obedience in the process of sanctification, which Paul explains further in the next chapter of Philippians. He describes himself as “straining” and “pressing on” toward the goal of Christlikeness ([Philippians 3:13-14](#)). The “trembling” he experiences is the attitude Christians are to have in pursuing this goal—a healthy fear of offending God through disobedience and an awe and respect for His majesty and holiness. “Trembling” can also refer to a shaking due to weakness, but this is a weakness of higher purpose, one which brings us to a state of dependency on God. Obedience and submission to the God we revere and respect is our “reasonable service” ([Romans 12:1-2](#)) and brings great joy. [Psalm 2:11](#) sums it up perfectly: “Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.” We work out our salvation by going to the very source of our salvation—the Word of God—wherein we renew our hearts and minds ([Romans 12:1-2](#)), coming into His presence with a spirit of reverence and awe. See: <https://www.gotquestions.org/fear-and-trembling.html>

This is to ensure that our journey as a Christ follower is effective and to avoid the onset of inertia, chronic or otherwise.

“For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are also told what will happen if our knowledge and understanding of our faith through grace¹² does not affect the way we live our lives.

“But whoever does not have them is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.”

Remember the context. Peter was writing to those believers who were living on the basis that their salvation through grace meant they could live debauched lives following false teaching. And Peter is calling his readers back to basics. Calling them back to the correct path. Calling on them to grow. And he then sets out the value of this growth.

We read:

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things,

you will never stumble,

and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

That is the destination!

This is a call to action, calling for every effort on our part to make sure that our behavior reflects and confirms our relationship with God. And by actively developing these qualities we will never stumble in our spiritual growth and we will live a life that leads others away from sin.¹³

And the final sentence:

“and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Where our faith comes from, what we have been given, and what we are to do and why.

A call to beware of false teaching.

A call to action, not inertia.

A call to encourage each other.

A call to look for ways of serving or assisting others.

A call never to give up but to persevere!¹⁴

Utreia! Suseia! Deus adjuva nos.

¹² Ephesians 2:8-9. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

¹³ Following the wording from the Amplified Bible.

¹⁴ Philippians 3:13-14. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Listen to the lyrics of Ulteia.
Every morning we take the path,
Every morning we go further.
Day after day, the road calls us
It is the voice of Compostela.
Go further! Go further! And go higher!
God assist us!
Dirt road and Faith
Ancient way of Europe,
The Milky Way of Charlemagne
This is the way all my pilgrims.
Go further! Go further! And go higher!
God assist us!
And while there at the end of the continent,
Santiago waits ahead,
Always his fixed smile
The sun dies in Finistère.
Go further! Go further! And go higher!
God assist us!

Gordon Hay
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