

## **Building a Faith That Lasts**

2 Peter 1:3-11

Series “Stronger”

**Jarrett Stephens**

This morning, we are kicking off our summer series and as you saw in the bumper video, it is all about getting and growing stronger spiritually.

You know, summer is a good time to get in shape physically! I remember growing up...and they still do this today with our student athletes. You have a summer program of weight training and running to prepare you for the Fall football season.

I hated those hot and humid summers in Louisiana...glad to get out of that and get down here to Houston! Ha!

Summer, while it's certainly an opportunity to get a break and refresh, it's also a time to focus. This doesn't just apply to us physically, but spiritually as well.

That's what we're after in this new series and over the course of the next nine weeks or so, as we do every summer, we'll have different pastors from our staff as well as guests rotate through here and our North Klein campus and we are going to talk about what Peter says we should be adding to our faith – NOT adding in the sense of saving us (we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone – we studied this in Ephesians), but instead, we are to add to our faith...Peter uses the word, “supplement” our faith in order to make it stronger.

Let's look at it together. The title of the message today is the title of the series: **Stronger: Building a Faith That Lasts**

We're not going to sweat to the oldies this summer (remember that! Richard Simmons), we're sweating to the holies! – let's listen to what God's Holy Word says about getting stronger and growing stronger in our faith.

**2 Peter 1:3-11 – “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,<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,<sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,<sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.<sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly**

**provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

This is such a wonderful passage of scripture, and I can’t wait for our pastors to take it apart this summer...they’ll be looking in depth at each of these qualities that are mentioned in (v. 5-7).

I want to begin our time today and bring an introduction to this series, and let’s just start here. We need to understand first and foremost that:

### **1. God wants us to grow stronger spiritually**

You understand this, right? God desires for each of us to grow...to mature...to develop...to get stronger spiritually!

This is what he wants for each person here, and the whole of scripture **ESPECIALLY** the New Testament teaches this. For example, we just got out of our study in the book of Ephesians. Recall what Paul wrote to them in:

**Eph. 4:11-14 – “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,<sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,<sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,<sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”**

The writer of Hebrews writes in: **Heb. 6:1a – “Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity...”**

Paul would write in Colossians that the goal...that the end game of his teaching and preaching ministry...hear this from:

**Col. 1:28 – “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”**

See, what the Lord wants is for you to be saved. But salvation in Christ isn’t the end of the Christian journey...it’s just the beginning! And from salvation, he wants you to grow to be more and more like Jesus.

Theologians call this process of becoming more and more like Jesus...the technical, theological term is: **Sanctification**

**Wayne Grudem** (*Systematic Theology*) – **“A progressive work of God and man (we’ll see what more of this looks like in just a moment...this is God and man working together in this!) that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.”**

There is salvation...this is the foundation...this is the starting point...and then once we enter into a relationship with Jesus that is by faith, God puts his Holy Spirit in us and at that moment, we begin the process (key term we'll come back to later – it's a process) of growing up to be more and more like Jesus.

This is sanctification – and this is God's desire for us. He is working in us, and we are cooperating with him so that just as Grudem states, we are more and more free from sin and more and more like Christ in our actual lives.

**Illus. Leonard Ravenhill** – One of my favorite revivalists to read is a man by the name of Leonard Ravenhill. He was from the UK, but moved to the United States and had a huge ministry here in the States specifically in the 60's and 70's.

He wrote a lot about prayer and spiritual awakening. He's buried in a small cemetery in East Texas. I've been there to pay my respects to this man whose ministry has meant a lot to me over the years.

In fact, I keep in my office a picture of his gravestone...it's so moving to me – here's a picture of it. It says, "Are the things you are living for worth Christ dying for?"

Leonard wrote in his book, *Why Revival Tarries* the following:

**"The greatest miracle that God can do today is to take an unholy man out of unholy world, and make that man holy and put him back into that unholy world and keep him holy in it."**

That's the miracle of sanctification...it's the miracle of not just the new birth, but growing up to be more and more free of sin and more and more like Jesus in our actual lives.

**1 Thess. 4:3a – "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..."**

So, before we move forward, let's just stop and answer this question of application. We know from the whole of scripture, God desires for us to grow up and grow strong spiritually. The question, I want to ask you is, "Do you desire this?"

Right now...is there a burning desire within that yearns to be more like Christ?

If you are truly saved, it may just be embers that are burning...you might as it was said of the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2) that you've abandoned your first love – of that's you what Christ wants to do today is to set you ablaze once again for him.

He wants you to grow up and grow strong spiritually...he does! So much so that what we see next in the text is:

**2. God has given us everything we need to grow stronger spiritually**

**2 Peter 1:3-4 – “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,<sup>4</sup> 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.”**

Now, if you are a note-taker, I want you to write down three descriptor terms if you will that are given to us in this passage of scripture...we'll talk about each one of them very briefly.

First is: **Divine Power**

This passage teaches that once you are in a relationship with Jesus, he gives you EVERYTHING you need for life and godliness – amazing!

Really think about this! You have EVERYTHING at your disposal to live a godly life.

This is beautiful because what it teaches is that God does not just save us and then leaves us to figure it out the Christian life on our own. Instead, he equips us and supplies us with everything we need to live out the life he desires for us!

Notice how this “divine power” is made known? It’s made known (v. 3b) through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”

Now, next week, I’ll be at the North Klein Campus and Mark Lanier will be preaching here. I’m not going to steal his thunder because he’s going to be preaching on what this knowledge is...what it’s all about.

It’s one of the qualities that we are told in (v. 5) to make sure we add to our faith.

It’s an important word here in Peter’s writing. It’s used 13x in this small little letter and Peter uses two different forms of the word - both translated as knowledge.

What Peter is teaching here is that we have an understanding of this divine power that enables and equips and supplies us because we’ve been divinely made aware of it...that’s what knowledge is – it’s a revelatory knowledge.

As we grow in intimacy with Jesus, we become more aware of his divine power and how it grants us everything we need for life and godliness. This knowledge of God...it doesn’t come by acquiring more information, it comes by acquiring more intimacy.

This is why “time alone” with God is so important. The more you grow in intimacy with him, the more of his divine power and all that it grants you is revealed. Look at the next term Peter uses:

It’s the term: **Divine Promises**

**2 Peter 1:4 – “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.”**

See, you take the divine power of God that supplies us with everything we need to live a godly life...and you combine that with God’s great and precious promises – i.e., his Word, and look at what you get:

It’s the third term: **Divine Partakers**

This is the essence of sanctification. When we are saved, we are the recipients of God’s power. We give ourselves to and take in and claim his precious promises and as we walk in them, we become “divine partakers” – i.e., we become like God.

One of the early church fathers, Irenaeus put it like this: **“He became what we are in order to make us what he is.”**

So, if you are not becoming a divine partaker – it’s either because you have never experienced his power – i.e., his salvation OR you’re not showing up for time alone with him, growing in intimacy and giving yourself to his “precious promises”!

I love that Peter uses the term “precious” here...it means “highly valued” ...it’s “worthy”.

Peter uses this word to describe the blood of Jesus in 1 Peter 1:19 – he says, “it’s precious”. He uses it to describe our faith in 2 Peter 1:1 and 1 Peter 1:7 – it’s “precious”. He refers to Jesus as a “precious Savior” in 1 Peter 2:7.

He loved this word, and here he describes God’s promises as “precious”. Listen:

- We’ll never participate in the divine apart from knowing and walking in God’s promises (i.e., his Word). This is why it’s precious!
- We’ll never grow in intimacy and understand his divine power that supplies us with everything we need for a godly life apart from knowing and walking in his promises (i.e., his Word). This is why it’s precious!
- We’ll never grow stronger spiritually without seeing his Word as Peter sees it - as “precious” ...worthy...as highly valued. (2 Peter 1:21 – not produced by will of man, but carried along by the Holy Spirit) – it’s precious!

It could be that the reason some are here today, and your growth is stunted spiritually is because you’re not giving yourself over to his promises!

**Illus. Discipleship** – your sanctification is dependent upon your time in the Word with the Word (person!) Let this be your mantra!

You want to grow stronger spiritually: In the Word, with the Word! I see no other way of (v. 4) escaping the corruption of the world to becoming more and more like Jesus.

See, here's the problem as it relates to sanctification...as it relates to growing stronger spiritually. The issue is NOT God!

We've already said and established the fact via scripture that God wants us to grow stronger spiritually. We've established as fact that God has given us everything we need to grow stronger spiritually.

Here's point number three and I think we'll see the issue in this:

### **3. We have a responsibility to do what it takes to grow stronger spiritually**

God is not the problem as it relates to growing stronger spiritually...we are! This is why Peter writes in:

**2 Peter 1:5-8 – “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> 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.”**

Let's go back to Grudem's definition of sanctification.

**Wayne Grudem – “A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.”**

As it relates to becoming more like Jesus, I can assure you God is and will do his part...we have to cooperate! Notice what Peter tells us to do! He says in (v. 5) we are to “make every effort” to build on our faith...to grow stronger spiritually.

Look, just because you are a Christian does not mean that you look like Christ...it should! That's actually where the name “Christian” came from – it means “little Christs”.

People saw believers...how they lived...how they made decisions...how they treated one another...how they cared for the poor and the outcast...and they said, their go some “little Christs” ...there goes some Christians.

Resembling Christ...truly looking like him, this is something we cooperate in! It doesn't just happen! You are not going to grow stronger spiritually just because you sleep with a Bible on your nightstand!

Getting stronger spiritually is not any more passive than getting stronger physically – it takes action!

**Illus. Dumbbell** – I can look at this dumbbell all day long...I can take it with me to work...I can sit it on my office...in the car next to me when I drive – that's NOT going to make me stronger. I can go to where all the dumbbells are (Planet Fitness, Lifetime Fitness)

The only way I get stronger is if I pick this up and start using it! The same is the case spiritually. Until I start acting on what I know, I'm not going to grow stronger spiritually. I have a part to play in this!

**illus. River Day** – “Let go and Let God!” – J.I Packer – “trust God and get going!”

Paul put it like this in **Phil. 2:12-13** – “**Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**”

We have a responsibility to be proactive in our spiritual growth. We will not get stronger unless we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and yield our lives and will to him.

On that note...let me VERY quickly say under this point of our responsibility...this process of sanctification involves the whole person – our mind, our heart, our will.

If we are going to grow stronger spiritually – it takes our mind! Peter uses this word knowledge...it's experiential knowledge in some cases, but as we've seen it also involves knowing his word – this is a matter of the mind!

If we don't take our thoughts captive...if we don't prepare our minds for action as Peter calls us to in (1 Peter 1:13), we'll never have the mindset of growth we need to have.

This is a matter of prayer – every day, ask the Lord to give you the mindset you need for spiritually getting stronger and giving yourself fully to the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2 – transformed by renewing of the mind!)

It's not just a matter of the mind, it's a matter of the heart as well. It involves your affections. Just read the list Peter gives of qualities that we need to supplement our faith with, and you will see that God has to have our heart – we'll talk about that in this series.

Getting stronger spiritually, it's a matter of the will as well. Again, we are to “make every effort”! This means we are to be diligent and zealous as it relates to our spiritual growth.

? – you know what amazes me? What amazes me is how intentional we can get about our hobbies and interests...how much we invest in those things and care about those things...we are

zealous about all these things, but when it comes to getting stronger spiritually, we thinking “lifting this weight” and coming to church once a week is going to do it?

NO WAY! We’ve got to engage and come under the rule and reign of God, the Holy Spirit and cooperate with him as he seeks to conform us to the image of his Son.

To use the words of Paul, we work out as he works in! We have a responsibility to do whatever it takes to grow stronger spiritually.

**Illus. Hebrews message series in the Fall** – “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles...”

? – Are you doing what it takes to grow strong spiritually? Are you cooperating with the Holy Spirit as he calls you to give up certain things (choices, behaviors, relationships that aren’t healthy). Are you cooperating with the Holy Spirit as he calls you to participate in certain things? (small group, get to camp, time alone).

This is how we grow strong spiritually. We cooperate with what and where God is leading, and as we move by faith, it gets stronger.

My assignment in week one is to talk about this first quality Peter mentions to add to our faith – he says, “add” – the word also means to generously supply – i.e. supplement your faith with “virtue”.

Some Bibles translates this as the word “goodness”. It’s translated up in (v. 3) to describe God’s glory and “excellence” – that’s what the word means. It’s used to describe “moral excellence”.

The ESV Study Bible notes that this word was used by the Greeks to describe “the sum of all desirable character qualities”.

This is what God via Peter is calling us to...he’s calling us to build on our faith, by adding “virtue” – character...moral excellence to it.

To put it in our vernacular, “we’re walking the walk”. There is a sense of wholeness to the way we live our lives. With this word is a sense of “I’m going to do what’s right even if it costs me.” That’s virtue...goodness!

The same quality God possesses, we are called to possess. And notice what Peter says about this as he does all of these various qualities.

**2 Peter 1:8 – “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.”**

In other words, this is NOT a one-time thing, but it should be increasing always. Can we go back to our Grudem definition again?



**Wayne Grudem – “A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.”**

Not a one of us have arrived...living out virtue will be something that will have to be focused on daily...it's repetitious...it's continual!

It should be increasing – “more and more free from sin and more and more like Christ in our actual lives” – progressive sanctification. This is what we are after!

Finally, the last point I want us to consider. Here's what we've said thus far:

1. God wants us to grow stronger spiritually
2. God has given us everything we need to grow stronger spiritually
3. We have a responsibility to do what it takes to grow stronger spiritually
4. **The benefits of growing stronger spiritually**

**2 Peter 1:8-11 – “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. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

Four benefits of growing stronger spiritually. I'll put them in the positive:

First: **Growing stronger spiritually, enables us to be effective and productive**

Isn't this what we want? We want our lives to be fruitful...who wants to be described as the above? Ineffective and unfruitful!

**Illus. Jesus cursing the fig tree/John 15 abide**

Second: **Growing stronger spiritually, allows us to see clearly and remember God's work in our life**

I've said this before, sin causes spiritual dementia. You stunt your growth and refuse to get off milk, what will happen is you will begin to forget all God has done for you. Peter calls it “nearsighted and blind” – you can't see spiritually.

You don't want this! There is not much worse than not being able to see clearly!

**Illus. Camp** – had a whole conversation with someone I couldn't even see!

### Thirdly: **Growing stronger spiritually, confirms our calling and election**

This is a BIG one! You want to know if you are truly saved...don't base it on a prayer you said in VBS (I'm not knocking that btw), and your life never changed! If you want to know if you are truly saved, are you growing stronger spiritually?

Come each week of this series and see if these qualities that we talk about are increasing in your life. If so, this is the proof of salvation you are looking for!

### Then fourth and finally: **Growing stronger spiritually, assures us of a rich welcome into the kingdom.**

This is NOT a works-based salvation, but someone who is saved will be growing stronger spiritually and can be assured that they will not just enter the kingdom of heaven, but will be as Peter says here, "a richly provided" into the kingdom – there will be reward and blessing for the life you have lived.

This person is not entering heaven by the skin of their teeth, but instead hears the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant – enter into the joy of your Master" ...they are "richly provided" for as they enter the kingdom – this speaks of blessing and reward.

? – Are you growing strong spiritually? Perhaps another way to ask is the way Ravenhill put it on his gravestone – Are the things you are living for worth Christ dying for?

So, what do you say we get stronger spiritually this summer? Don't miss a workout...a Sunday...and if you do, follow along online.

By the time we end this series, this summer, we're going to be some buff believers!

Will you pray with me?

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