

Excerpts from Life-Study of 2 Peter, Message 6
THE DIVINE PROVISION (6)

Bible Verses:

2 Pet. 1:5-7 And for this very reason also, adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue; and in virtue, knowledge; and in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in endurance, godliness; and in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love.

In verse 5 Peter urges us to supply bountifully in our faith virtue. What the divine power has given us in 1:3 and 4 is developed in verses 5 through 7. To supply virtue in faith is to develop virtue in the exercise of faith. The same principle applies to all the other items.

The word supply here actually means “develop.” Peter is telling us to develop what we already have. We have faith, and now in our faith we need to develop virtue.

After a seed has been sown in the soil, it needs to be developed. The principle is the same with the development of the seed of faith. In our faith we need to develop virtue. Literally, the Greek word for virtue

means “excellency.” It denotes the energy of the divine life, which issues in vigorous action. If faith is regarded as the seed, virtue may be considered a root that comes out of this seed.

In 1:5 Peter also tells us to supply “in virtue, knowledge.” Virtue, the vigorous action, needs the bountiful supply of the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (vv. 2, 3, 8) regarding the all things that relate to the divine life and godliness and the partaking of the divine nature (vv. 3-4) for our enjoyment in the subsequent development. The knowledge that we should develop in our virtue includes the knowledge of God and of our Savior, the knowledge of God’s economy, the knowledge of what faith is, and the knowledge of the divine power, glory, virtue, nature, and life. Actually, this is the knowledge of all things related to life and godliness. We must have this knowledge developed in our virtue. It is not adequate to have virtue without knowledge. I believe that knowledge also is a primary root that develops out of the seed of faith. With virtue and knowledge we have the growth of the seed.

In verse 6 Peter continues, “And in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in

endurance, godliness.” Self-control, or temperance, is the exercise of control and restraint over one’s self in its passions, desires, and habits. This needs to be supplied and developed in knowledge for the proper growth in life.

According to Peter’s word in verse 6, in our self-control we need to develop endurance. Self-control is to deal with ourselves; endurance is to bear with others and with circumstances. In order to live a proper Christian life, we need endurance toward those around us and also toward our environment and circumstances.

In verse 7 Peter concludes, “And in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love.” The Greek word rendered “brotherly love” is philadelphia, composed of phileo, “to have affection for,” and adelphos, “a brother”; hence, brotherly affection, a love characterized by delight and pleasure. In godliness, which is the expression of God, this love needs to be supplied for the brotherhood (1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8; Gal. 6:10), for our testimony to the world (John 13:34-35), and for the bearing of fruit (15:16-17).

Actually, in the church life we may prefer a certain brother whom we regard as nice and love him, but we

may not appreciate another brother as much. We may have love for both brothers, but that love is shallow. Therefore, we need a deeper, nobler love. This love is agape. When we have this kind of love, we love all the brothers the same, no matter what kind of brothers they may be.

In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we have the development from faith to love. This development includes virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, and godliness. Eventually, we have the full development and maturity from the seed of faith, through the roots of virtue and knowledge, the trunk of self-control, and the branches of endurance and godliness, to the blossom and the fruit of brotherly love and love.

In verse 8 Peter goes on to say, “For these things, existing in you and abounding, constitute you neither idle nor unfruitful unto the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The words these things refer to all the virtues covered in verses 5 through 7, from faith to love. Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly love, and love should all exist in us. Nevertheless, these are only some of the “all things” that have been granted to us by the divine power. We need to see that all these things are included

in the seed. This seed contains the root, the trunk, the branches, the blossom, and the fruit.

There is a distinction between developing something and being constituted of something. Developing a matter implies that we already have something that needs to be developed. But being constituted of a particular element implies that something is about to be added to us that we do not already possess. We have faith as a seed that includes Christ as life. Actually, this seed is the Triune God. We have seen that we need to develop in our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly love, and love. We also need to be constituted of all these elements that are developed.

In verse 8 Peter speaks of not being idle or unfruitful “unto the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The constitution that has the spiritual virtues as its constituents advances in many steps toward the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a view to the full realization of the all-inclusive embodiment of the Triune God. In this section of the Word, three prepositions are used regarding the relationship between the experience of life and spiritual knowledge: in, in verse 2, referring to the sphere of the knowledge;

through, in verse 3, referring to the channel of the knowledge; and unto, in verse 8, referring to the knowledge in view as a goal. Our experiential knowledge of the Lord increases according to the degree of our growth in life.

In verse 9 Peter says, “For he in whom these things are not present is blind, being shortsighted, having forgotten the cleansing of his past sins.” As in verse 8, these things refers to all the virtues covered in verses 5 through 7. The one in whom these things are not present is blind, being shortsighted. The Greek word rendered “shortsighted” comes from the root word that means “to close the eyes because of strong light”; hence, to be shortsighted. To be thus shortsighted is to be spiritually blind, unable to see something further in the divine life and divine nature of the Triune God dispensed into the believers as their bountiful supply.

In verse 10 Peter continues, “Therefore, brothers, be the more diligent to make your calling and selection firm, for doing these things you shall by no means ever stumble.” Here to be diligent is to develop the spiritual virtues in the divine life, to advance in the growth of the divine life. This makes God’s calling and selection of us firm.

In verse 11 Peter concludes, “For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to you.” The bountiful supply that we enjoy in the development of the divine life and divine nature will bountifully supply us a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord. It will enable and qualify us to enter into the coming kingdom by all the riches of the divine life and divine nature as our excellent virtues (energy) unto the splendid glory of God. This is not merely to be saved but, after being saved, to pursue the growth and maturity in the divine life and thereby receive the kingdom reward.

Second Peter 1:11 indicates that we may have an entrance richly and bountifully supplied into the kingdom of our Lord. However, a good number of Christians will not have such an entrance, because they have never built up this entrance by developing the divine seed unto maturity. If we are not constituted of the divine virtues, we will not be able to build up such an entrance. But if we have the development of the divine life and are constituted of the elements of the divine nature, a rich and bountiful entrance into the coming kingdom will be supplied to us.

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary]:

Introduction

[CW]: Second Peter 1 leads us through a wonderful progression or development of the precious faith that Peter mentions to us in his first epistle. This faith, our divine inheritance, is like a divine seed, imparted or planted into our being. As with any seed, deep within reside all the attributes of the life of that seed. And Peter clearly tells us that the life in the seed of faith is the very life of God. It's Christ Himself. So, the attributes which Peter goes on to describe are the marvelous virtues of God's life as it's expressed in Christ. Following this line, these verses in 2 Peter, open to us the progressive development of the divine life within the seeker as we move from faith to virtue, to knowledge, to self-control to endurance, to godliness and then to brotherly love, with the final stage of this life maturity being the very agape love, God's own love being expressed. Matt Miller has joined us for this fellowship from. We continue Matt in Second Peter, chapter one, and we just can't seem to get free of these verses. There's so much in this passage. As Bob Danker mentioned in our program yesterday, maybe the most condensed portion of the whole New Testament, isn't it?

[MM]: It's an incredible portion. Chris and I was looking over the life-studies in the context of the program we're doing today. And it's a special program, because this program, along with the one you're going to do tomorrow, there's only two programs that cover these verses in chapter one of Second Peter, verses five through 11, and that's today and tomorrow. And in these verses, five through 11 cover these eight attributes that you just mentioned. There's a lot there. And we've only got two programs devoted to and it's a very condensed portion of the word. The title of the Life-study is *The Divine Provision*. So, we've really got a lot for our listeners, if they'll stay with us for the next half hour.

[CW]: Let's pick up verse five, Matt. *"And for this very reason also, adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue, and in virtue, knowledge."* So, the apostle Peter, beginning this list of attributes as you described him. And we'll see this thought developed, I think, in a way that will make this matter much more clear to our listeners after we hear Witness Lee and his very anointed sharing in this passage. Let's join him right now.

Part 1

[CW]: Matt, I don't want to get bogged down in the minutia here, but there's a concept. There's a conceptual thing here that I think is really critical to getting into this matter in a good way, in a deeper way. We have this phrase in chapter one, verse five, and it says "adding all diligence", then it says, "supply bountifully." So, as he said, actually there are these two terms. One is adding diligence, and then supply bountifully in your faith. But we're really not talking about adding something to our faith. I mean, really, there's nothing we can add to our faith, is there?

[MM]: No, there's not, Chris, and that's an important point, because what is it we're adding to and and I know with the radio, time is short, but I think for clarity here, I want to read verses three and four, just for those who haven't been following us, they didn't hear yesterday's program, because it says in verse five, *for this very reason*.

What's the very reason these are landmark verses. In Verse three and four, this is a great reason. Verse three says, "Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue." So, in verse three, we have this matter of full knowledge. Yes, the first condition. Then in verse four, "Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust." And then verse five, "And for this very reason also, adding all diligence." So, we add diligence to the precious promises, we've got exceedingly great promises given to us in the Word of God. And by partaking of those promises, we escape the corruption that's in the world through lust. And for this very reason, we add all diligence, so alongside of the promises that we have, alongside of the Word of God, the precious promises, we add in our diligence, and we supply bountifully in our faith, virtue. And before we go on to the next portion, I just wanted to comment that this word virtue, it literally means, in the Greek, excellency, it denotes the energy of the divine life, issuing in a vigorous action. So, that's the virtue. Okay, we supply bountifully in our faith virtue, this vigorous action that results from the energy of the divine life. As we go on, we're going to see more of this in the program and develop this thought, because it's like a seed. Faith is like a seed in us. Everything is in the seed, but that seed needs to grow. It's not like we add to the seed, but water develops the seed, right? And all we're doing is developing the faith in us by adding our diligence.

[CW]: Yeah, so our diligence just is the cooperation God needs to allow the divine power to operate in us according to these precious and exceedingly great promises that brings about the escaping the corruption that's in the world by lust. And then we're really on the path where this faith, the seed of faith that's already been planted in us, and that's where we're going to go in this next portion begins to develop. And with every seed, the development, all of the attributes life in that seed really become manifest and expressed, isn't it?

[MM]: It is Chris. It requires our cooperation, and it's going to result in an entrance into the kingdom. That's what's at the end of these verses. In verse 11, being supplied bountifully, an entrance into the kingdom. I know you're going to cover that in tomorrow's program, but I think it's good to have the picture of where this is all headed. This development, this growth, is resulting in something, an entrance into the kingdom.

All right, let's go on. We've had virtue bountifully supplied in our faith, and you just gave us a little introduction to this thought of the virtues, the attributes of the divine life and in virtue, knowledge. Now verse six says, "*And in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in endurance, godliness;*" And then verse seven, "*And in godliness, brotherly love; and finally, love.*" And, of course, we will find out these are two different words for *love* given to us in the New Testament. All right, let's go back to Witness Lee.

Part 2

[CW]: Now we have the premise here that He underscored so well. I thought at the beginning of that section that all these attributes, all of these characteristics, the virtue, the knowledge, the self-control, the endurance, the godliness, brotherly love, ultimately love, all these things are contained in the seed. And so, what is at issue here is the development of this seed, and then the produce the result, as he said, is a kind of an expression, even of love that goes so far beyond what we are capable of in our natural life. It should permanently give us an exit from that whole realm, shouldn't it?

[MM]: It should. Chris, and this is really quite a picture in 2 Peter, as it goes through this progression, this development, and it ends with brotherly love and supplying your brotherly love, love. When we read that in the English, it almost sounds funny to supply love in your love. But in the Greek, those are two different words. I mean the final love is agape love. That's God's love. It's an unchanging love. It's a higher love that's different than the *phileo*, which is the brotherly love. It's one thing to love a brother. It's another thing to have God's love, and that

love is higher, it's deeper, it's unchangeable, and that's the ultimate expression when we can love with God's love. This is a love that's not part of our natural constitution. Our natural constitution does not have the ability to love this way, because it's God's love. And so going through the process of all these items, the concluding thing is the expression. The result is God's love being expressed through us. What a wonderful expression. You know, Witness Lee uses the example. It starts with a seed, and then the first few items mentioned in verse five, it says, supply bountifully in your faith, that's the seed virtue. And in your virtue knowledge, this is like the first wedging out, so to speak, or branching out from the seed. And then in your knowledge, self-control, still quite at the source, quite at the root, at the center, self-control. And in your self-control, endurance, okay, self-control is toward ourselves. Endurance, it's towards others. We have to endure an environment. We have to endure people we're around, we're close to. So first we have self-control. So, in our knowledge, we should have self-control, and in our self-control, endurance. So, it's now progressed not just inwardly having the self-control toward ourselves. Outwardly now we have endurance toward others in our environment, but then it goes on and in your endurance godliness. Now it's not only toward others and our environment, now it's toward God. So, it's kind of like the branch of the tree. And now we're getting to the branches of the tree. So, you have a seed with a trunk, and then some branches coming out, and then at the very end, in your godliness, brotherly love, and in brotherly love, love. That's like the blossoms on the tree, the beautiful expression that God desires.

[CW]: I like the adjective he uses regarding this agape love, the ultimate result. It's a nobler love, and I think that's something we can all have a kind of ability to understand a little bit. We all recognize our own love, perhaps how we love our wives, our children, our friends, our family members. It's got such limitations to it, and so often it ebbs and flows with our emotional condition. There's not that noble quality to it, but God's love, it just as you said, is unchanging, it's just surpassing, isn't it? And it really is an expression of God Himself. It's something we just don't have the capacity in and of ourselves to produce.

[MM]: And it's unconditional. You know, our love sometimes is a lot what's in it for me? And that's not a noble love. But like you said, the Agape love is a noble higher love.

[CW]: Matt, we want to go on to verse eight, and I think it would be good. Maybe we should read verse 1 also as a kind of a concluding word for our program today. But at least in verse eight, we finished this thought of the development of the seed, *"For these things, existing in you and abounding, constitute you neither idle nor unfruitful unto the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* And if you have it there, why don't you read verse 11?

[MM]: *"For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to you."*

[CW]: All right. Let's join Witness Lee for our final portion today.

Part 3

[CW]: Matt, I think the three words in this verse that jump out at me after hearing him speak, are existing in you. All these things already exist in us by virtue of the seed. So, there's no way we can add these things to faith. They're already incorporate in the faith, aren't they?

[MM]: We just need to be constituted with it. This is a great word in the verse. I like how it says it constitutes you neither idle nor unfruitful. I like that, because idleness and unfruitfulness are the constituents of our natural constitution, but the constituents of our divine constitution, of our new birth when we're born again, we get a new constitution in that seed. That seed isn't constituted idle or unfruitful. It's very fruitful. It's a fruitful constitution. It's full of divine energy. So, it's a constitutional matter. It's like you said, it's not something we can add another element to it. It's all there. We just add our diligence to it. But we're adding diligence. It's like adding

water to a seed. The seed has everything in it. This is really a great picture. We skip from verse eight to verse 11, Chris. I'd like to insert verse 10. It says, "Therefore, brothers, be the more diligent to make your calling and selection firm for doing these things you shall by no means ever stumble." You know, Chris, a lot of Christians, they stumble and they don't have the assurance. They're not firm in their calling, because they don't take this path, this path of being constituted, of adding the diligence, taking the way of the divine power, having the full knowledge, of partaking of the divine nature, escaping the corruption in the world. There's a lot in these verses, and this is the path that causes us to be firm and not shaken in our faith. Some would stumble, some would be shaken in their faith. Well, it's because they're not in this path. We really need to take heed to Peter's word.

[CW]: And then, Matt, at the conclusion of this path lies this "bountifully supplied entrance into the kingdom."

[MM]: And I'm really glad you're doing another program tomorrow, Chris, I know you're going to cover that tomorrow's program. So I hope our listeners will come back, because this is really only part A of this wonderful portion in the word.

[CW]: Well, that's a good promo for tomorrow's program. Add to that promo our invitation for you to contact us to find out about getting the printed life-studies, as I think you can probably tell in these last few programs, the content has been significant, and it's actually been beyond what we're capable of covering in the, you know, 20 plus minutes that we have for the actual program. So, the way to make up for our lack is to get the printed life study messages for yourself and the Recovery Version with these footnotes. And really you can linger over this portion Matt and these messages for a long time to take it all in. And I think that's really a good recommended way for all of us, isn't it?

[MM]: Well, that would be the partaking that we're talking about, so that there could be more escaping.

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