

"Reminders For The Redeemed"

Holiness

2 Peter 1:12-15

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning, Bruce.

Bruce: Good to be with all of you. Let's stay warm today. Hopefully, the Lord will give us some warm things to think about.

Let's open your Bibles, please, to 2 Peter chapter 1. We have been discussing in recent weeks the design and implementation of the divine life, that we might escape the corruption in this world from evil desires. We've been talking about the divine life. Today we'll be in verses 12-15 of 2 Peter chapter 1.

"Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as the Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things."

Let's pray together, men. Father, You have given us much in recent weeks about our understanding of the divine life. Father, we're just overwhelmed that You would condescend to bring us into Your presence through the reconciliation work of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Father, we pray that You'd put all the frustrations and consternations of this world behind us, that our minds would be focused upon You, and that You would be pleased once again to open our eyes that we might behold You for Christ's sake. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Several generations ago, there was an academic educational system known as the three R's—reading, writing and 'rithmetic. Peter seems to understand that concept today in our passage. He has three R's that he talks about a little bit differently. His R's are to *remind* in verse 12, to *refresh* in verse 13, and to *remember* in verse 15. Now your Bible translations may have different wording, but essentially those are the three words that he talks about. The three R's in Peter's mind are to remind us, to refresh us, and to remember things of the past that he has taught us.

Now the point that Peter is stressing is he understands these three R's. And the importance for Peter as a preacher of the gospel is to repeat certain known facts that people will not forget. His teaching here is that people are likely to forget these things unless they are repeated and taught repeatedly. And so he comes up with his own three R's.

Now I think Peter models for us the role of a pastor/teacher quite explicitly, because the role of a pastor/teacher is not only to impart truth to people which they have not heard before, but a major portion of a pastor/teacher's work is also to bring to recollection those well-known truths so that people can change the conduct of their lives by remembering the truths that he has taught them in the past.

Participant: Amen.

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Bruce: And so as a pastor Peter is describing for us that a pastor doesn't necessarily need to have new originality all the time. Sometimes it is just good to repeat the things that he has already taught us beforehand. And that's what we're going to do today.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Peter has demonstrated that preachers have an essential ministry of reminding us of certain things that he has taught us in the past so that we will always cat upon the truths that he has taught us.

And so what Peter is going to do in our passage today is three things. He's going to remind us of some things that we're inclined to forget. That's why we remind people. Second, he's going to refresh our memory—verse 13—to excite or arouse people and his readers to have a diligent performance of the things that they've learned. And the third thing he is going to say is to bring to remembrance those things that you've learned. Repetition is a wonderful way of teaching. And Peter goes to these three R's.

Now they're a bit different for Peter. But what we want to do today is that we're going to go back and take a look at all the things that we learned about the divine life. This is such an important passage of Scripture that we need to be reminded of the things that we've already learned. So you're not going to get anything explicitly new today. This is going to be a review. And the way we're going to do that is just to take the three words that Peter talks about—those three words to remind us, to refresh us and to bring to remembrance—and we're going to go back and take a look at what Peter has been teaching us about the divine life. So this may not be anything new. But it's important for us to remind ourselves of certain things, because if we forget those truths that Peter has taught us, we will not act on them. And so now we need to remind ourselves of the certain truths that Peter has taught us about the divine life.

The way I've looked at this is that he has five important reminders for us, five truths which, if applied, will set us free from the world system. Again, he's going to be talking about how we think before we act. So don't expect anything new. Let's just do a quick review.

All of them have to do with excellence—what I'm calling spiritual excellence. Remember, there is a difference between excellence and success. Success is like chasing a cat up a tree. You never know what definition you're going to get.

You might ask the president of your company, "What is your definition of success?" That president will give you his or her expression of success. You could ask your division head, "What is your definition of success?", and you might get a different one because of the perspective of where they are in the mission of their organization. And then you ask your boss and you might get a third one. So who's do you follow? Do you follow the president, the division head or your own boss? And so success is something that is defined by the individual.

Excellence is different. Excellence is the condition of a person. It's the state of a person. And success is the expression of the person.

Excellence is the state or the condition of a person. That's why we're going to call these things the five things of being excellent in our spiritual growth. So excellence is the state or condition of the person and success is the expression of that excellence.

So Peter is going to give us, as a matter of review, five spiritually excellent reminders that he wants us to remember so that they will stimulate us to right action and righteousness. So let's go through these.

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The first one is this. *Spiritual excellence is the goal of our faith.* That's verses 3 and 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, 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."*

You see, the first issue of spiritual excellence, the first goal, is to be spiritually excellent in our faith. It's the goal of our faith. Peter has told us that all that we need is found in the Person and work of Christ. Everything God has given us is designed to make us excellent in our faith. Conforming to Christ is the goal. Conforming to Christ is the goal of our faith.

Let me give you some cross references about Christlikeness. You just might want to jot these down and look them up yourself later. But remember this. Conformity to Christ is the goal and that is the goal of our faith.

The ultimate aim of the Christian life is to be Christlike. Romans 8:29. *"For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might become the firstborn among many brethren."*

2 Corinthians 3:18. *"And we who have unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory and are being transformed with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

Another one would be Philippians 3:21. *"Who by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body."*

And one more. 1 John 3:2. *"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."*

Now that's the goal of our faith, men. Peter reminds us that spiritual excellence is the goal of our faith.

Now we need to understand that spirituality is an absolute. Spirituality is an absolute defined by the Person and work of Christ. You and I do not become more spiritual. We become more mature. Maturity is becoming more Christlike. But the Person who defines spirituality is Christ Himself. Maturity is a visible sign, defined by our degree of our conformity to Christ. That's our maturity. Maturity is basically less of me and more of Christ. But spirituality is defined by the Person and work of Christ. How many times have you been in a conversation with people and they say, "Well, he's a very spiritual person," because he worships a tree, or whatever it may be. You see, spirituality is defined by a Person. It's not defined by an individual or the person himself. It's defined by the Person of Christ. You and I become more mature. And the excellent goal of our faith is to become more Christlike.

So Peter reminds us that we've been given all the resources we will ever need to become Christlike—verses 3 and 4. That's the first thing he wants to remind us of.

Secondly, *spiritual excellence is progressive in its nature.* Now salvation from God's point of view is instantaneous. It's immediate. When God saves a person, He does that immediately. Righteousness takes some time. And spiritual excellence is progressive in its nature because it doesn't happen all at once.

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You'll notice that in verses 5-7 of Peter's epistle. Look at verse 5. *"For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,"* and so forth. And look at verse 10. *"Therefore brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure."*

This is a process, men. It's something that you and I have to work at. Yes, God grants us saving faith. That's instantaneous from His point of view. But you and I have a responsibility to make every effort and work at it because we understand this, that spiritual excellence is progressive in its nature.

There is a great deal of confusion in the church today, men, about the concept of church *growth* and church *expansion*. We're talking about church growth. Biblically, that means understanding and becoming more Christlike. It means growing in grace.

It is not talking about numbers. That's church expansion. Church expansion means that you make an effort to bring people into the church. That's expanding the church. It's not growing the church.

All of the references to church growth and spiritual excellence in growing in Christ have to do with depth of understanding of the grace of God. Let me give you some Biblical references about church growth. It's not about numbers. It's about being progressive in our development in righteousness. First of all, the Scripture talks about *growth in fruitfulness*. 2 Corinthians 9:10. *"Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness."* Who provides what you need to become more righteous? God Himself does. He plants the seed and He increases that seed. That is called church growth.

Another reference would be *growth into Christ*. Ephesians 4:15. *"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the head, that is, Christ."* Church growth has to do with growing up in Christ.

How about growing in love? 1 Thessalonians 3:12. *"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you,"* Church growth is about depth in understanding the Person and Work of Christ in our fruitfulness, our relationship to Christ and in love.

How about perfection in our walk with Christ? Hebrews chapter 6 verse 1. *"Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity."* Church growth. Go on to maturity. *"Not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death ... and of faith in God."*

One more. We grow through the Word. 1 Peter 2:2. *"Like newborn babies, crave spiritual milk, so that you may grow up in your salvation."* Grow up in your salvation.

And then lastly, *in grace and in knowledge*. 2 Peter 3:18. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

Well the point that I'm trying to make, friends, is that we need to be reminded that spiritual growth is a process. It takes some time. And when we talk about church growth, we're talking about maturity in Christ, becoming more Christlike in all the things that I just made reference to.

There is another activity called church expansion. Don't get confused between the two. Church expansion means more numbers. Growth in Christ always means growing deeper in your faith. So spiritual excellence is a process in its nature and is not immediate.

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Let me give you a couple of examples of church growth in people, because church growth has to do with people. Here are just a couple of examples. In 1 Samuel 2²⁶, the boy Samuel is described like this. Now here is church growth. *"The boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men."* That's growth.

How about John the Baptist in Luke 1⁸⁰? *"The child grew and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel."*

And the infant Christ—Luke 2:40. *"And the Child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him."* And Luke 2⁵². *"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."*

And Paul—Acts 9:22. *"Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ."*

And then the church at Thessalonica—2 Thessalonians 1:3. *"We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing."*

Now do you understand what Peter is telling us? Spiritual excellence is a process, and growth and maturity in Christ takes some time. That means that we need to be patient with each other. This doesn't happen instantaneously. Church growth has to do with the individual person maturing in his faith in Christ. And the real question that we have to ask ourselves is are we progressing in our growth as a church, individually and collectively as the body of Christ?

One of the verses I want to mention here is the one referring to Jesus in Luke 2:52. *"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."* If you're looking to develop a church youth program, there is your best definition. That builds your youth program. *"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."* He grew spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially. Those are the four things that happened to Him. From the point when He was twelve years old till He was thirty, that is the only verse we have of those eighteen years of his life. And when I was pastoring a church, our whole youth program was based upon that one verse. One thing we wanted to do was to teach our young people to grow in wisdom intellectually, and spiritually—to grow in relationship to God Himself and man, to grow in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and man. That was the best youth program we could define. We were oriented around that because that way we could really impose on the kids church growth, growth in their own individual lives. So they grew intellectually—

Participant: What was that verse?

Bruce: Luke 2:52. *"And Jesus grew in wisdom."* Now just putting that in the terms of the world, that would be intellectually. *"In stature"*—that would be physically. He grew in favor with God. That's spiritually. And with man—that's socially.

There are your four things for creating a youth program. Make sure they grow physically. Make sure they grow intellectually. Make sure they grow spiritually. And make sure they grow socially. That's the best youth program you can have. Teach young men and young women how to grow in grace. And you will have that to be the definition of your youth program.

So we need to be patient with each other, men, because this doesn't occur all at once. Remember, salvation from God's point of view is instantaneous and immediate. But righteousness takes a little bit of time. And we need to be patient with each other. And Peter reminds us of that in all the things He has been teaching us.

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Number three would be this one. *Spiritual excellence requires diligent cultivation.* Take a look at verses 5 and 10 again. *"For this very reason, make every effort."* Verse 10. *"Therefore brothers, be all the more diligent."* Diligent use in all of these verses, meaning that we have to work hard at these things.

Years ago when I was with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes when I was at the Naval Academy, I got involved with FCA and they did some rallies around the country. And one of the men they had me do it with was a fellow by the name of Bill Bradley, who was a basketball player from Princeton. And so I sort of represented the football world and he represented the basketball world, and we used to go and do seminars for youth groups around the country during the summer.

He and I once went to a summer conference. We went and worked out after we had our responsibilities. And this is what he did. He had five spots on the basketball court. And he would stand and I would catch the ball. I would catch the basketball as it went through the net. He wouldn't move off that spot until he made twenty-five in a row. He stood right here and made twenty-five. If he got twenty-four and missed it, he would start all over again. So he did that five times—over here in the corner, up here at the foul line, over here at the corner. Five times he had to make twenty-five in a row before he moved.

Now that's diligence. I spent a lot of time catching basketballs. *(Laughter.)*

I said, "Okay, Bill. I'm going to throw it (the football) fifteen yards. I'm going to do it twenty-five times and you've got to run twenty-five patterns." *(Laughter.)*

He said, "No way." *Laughter.)*

My point is that this is what Peter is talking about. This requires diligence. Spiritual excellence requires diligent cultivation. You have to work at it. It's Philippians 2:13. *"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure."* He not only gives you the will. He gives you the power to do it. Two things He gives you—the will and the power to do it. But you and I have to work at it. Diligence is required for us to become spiritually excellent.

Let me give you a couple of verses to help you understand that. One of the first things we need to do is to put away childish things.

Participant: that's right.

Bruce: Put away childish things. 1 Corinthians 13:11. *"When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child; I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me."* We need to give up the triviality of childhood. And that doesn't mean that we don't come dependent upon Christ. But I'm saying that when you're maturing in grace, give up those things that are childish. Put away childish things. We need to grow in grace.

Participant: Bruce, can you give an example of what might be a childish thing?

Bruce: well, I'm sure that we could all come up with some. I would say that for me it would be phraseologies—such things as, "the great Pirate in the sky." I gave up that stuff.

When I was (*unclear*), I used to say things that I'm really ashamed that I said, now that I think about it, because what I was trying to do was that I was trying to appeal to the audience. And so once I made this statement. Oo! I hate even to bring it up! *(Laughter.)* I'll have to go and repent of this again. *(Laughter.)* But I made this statement. "Life is like a bowl of cherries and somebody else gets the pits." Now isn't that theologically wonderful?

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Men: very good. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: What am I talking about? But I thought that was the coolest thing since sliced bread. So I've given up some of those childish phraseologies that I used to use. I don't use the phrase "the great Pirate in the sky" anymore, or "the Master Coach." Those are just some of the things that I had to walk away from and give up because in my youthfulness I thought that they were the greatest things that I could say to get people to listen to me to make them respond to me positively. So I've had to give up some things like that.

It could be other things that you do. But for me it was some of the phraseology that I gave up. I just gave up those things because they made no sense at all and they were childish in my former years. Does anybody else have an idea of what you would give up that would be childish? Ted has a good question.

Participant: Independence. Being independent.

Bruce: Being independent.

Second Participant: Things that would build up your ego.

Bruce: Things that would build up your ego, certainly.

Third Participant: The opportunity to show a wedgie. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: Whatever that means. *(Laughter.)*

Fourth Participant: Maybe indulging yourself in self-pity or the whole idea of "it's not fair."

Bruce: Sure. Those are all things that, as a child you know, we always call attention to ourselves. Part of giving up childish things would be this—taking our eyes off of ourselves and putting them on somebody else. That would be an example of giving up childish things.

What else might be helpful for us to develop spiritual excellence which requires diligent cultivation? How about cultivating our understanding? We need to cultivate our understanding. 1 Corinthians 14:20. *"Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults."*

Participant: Which verse is that?

Bruce: That is 1 Corinthians 14:20.

How about striving after Christlikeness? Ephesians 4:13. *"Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

How about partaking of the deeper truths of the gospel? That's a way of developing spiritual excellence. Hebrews 5:14. *"But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."* We need to cultivate an understanding of deeper biblical truths.

Participant: What Scripture was that again, Bruce?

Bruce: That's Hebrews 5:14. And then by overcoming temptation. This is in 1 John 2:14. *"I write to you, brothers, because you have known Him who was from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you and you have overcome the evil one."*

Those are some of the things, men, that I would suggest that Peter is reminding us in his five R's—that spiritual excellence requires some diligence. And I would add Philippians 2:13 as the summary verse of all of that. You've got to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. That means that there is a lot of effort that goes into it. And God will give you the will and the

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power to do it. He is the One who causes us to do that. He is the One who works in us. He gives us the power, but we then use that power that He gives us by the grace of God. It's going to take diligent work for us to become spiritually mature and excellent.

to all of that.

Now what are some signs of spiritual immaturity? Let's just take the opposite case for a minute. Let me give you a couple of examples of immaturity.

One of the evidences of immaturity is the inability to receive strong doctrine, the inability to listen to strong doctrine. 1 Corinthians 3:1. "*Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly, mere infants in Christ.*" How about 1 Corinthians 3:2? "*I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed you are still not ready.*"

One of the signs of immaturity is the inability to receive strong doctrine. In other words, how many times do people say, "I don't want to go to that church because all they do is talk about doctrine?" Doctrine precedes practice always in the Scripture. And one of the signs of immaturity is a group of people who are not interested in hearing spiritual truths. They just want to go for entertainment, for joy, whatever it may be.

Several years ago I was filling in at a church as their interim pastor/teacher. After six months, I had a couple of people who called me on the phone. One of them said, "How long are you going to be here?" (*Laughter.*)

And I said, "Well, it might be another six months."

He said, "Oh, good! My wife will come back then."

Another one called me and said, "We're tired of being convicted. Can you help us to go to a church where we'll feel good?"

I said, "Well, I would be hopeful that the teaching would make you feel good, but you have to be convicted first."

He said, "Well, we're tired of being convicted. So we're going to leave the church and we're going to find somebody else."

You see, that's a sign of immaturity. Now I'm not being critical of them. I'm just making an observation that we have to understand that some people in their immaturity just don't want to have that. That's a sign of something inside of them that's amiss. Something inside of them is amiss. We just need to be careful about that. We need to grow in our understanding of Biblical truth.

Number four for your consideration would be this. Is this making any sense, men?

Men: Yes.

Bruce: I mean these are just things that we need to be reminded of. And there is nothing new here. I don't mean to bore you with old things. But I'm just trying to follow Peter's example of saying that we need to remind you of things. We need to bring certain things to remembrance. We need to recall certain things. And these are some of the things that Peter has been teaching us that I looked up and that I think we need to recall and remember about the divine life.

Fourth, would be this. *Spiritual excellence is the only guarantee of salvation.* That would be verse 9. "*For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he is cleansed from his former sins.*"

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Now we're not saying that knowledge earns your salvation. All we're saying is this, that if there is evidence of your salvation, then spiritual excellence is evidence of that salvation. It's increased righteousness.

Thomas Brooks, the great Puritan, says this. "The more the soul is conformed to Christ, the more confident it will be of its interest in Christ conforming to one's salvation." Maturity reveals indicators that you indeed possess the life of God.

Now I want you to go to the book of 1 John. Go to the book of 1 John, please. Now again, we're not saying that it earns salvation. We're just saying that it confirms your salvation. Spiritual excellence confirms your salvation; it does not earn it. Go to the book of 1 John.

Now there are seven tests of true saving faith and there are seven traits of people who have been truly born of God. I want to give you these seven because they really talk about the fact that spiritual excellence is the only guarantee of our salvation.

Look at 1 John 2:29. All of these phrases have the phrase "born of God." Look at 2:29. *"If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of God."* That's the trait of a person who has salvation—increased righteousness; born of God.

Secondly, look at 3:9. Same phrase—born of God again. *"No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God."* Twice there, it says this. You can't continue in your sin.

Now that doesn't mean that you're sinlessly perfect. We're not talking about that. It says that when you recognize a sin, you quit doing it. You don't continue in it. It's just not something you're always doing. That's a sign of your salvation, when you see your sin and you stop it. It would be dangerous if you would see your sin and continue in it. Being born of God is truly an indication of your salvation.

How about 3:14? *"We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death."* There you see that the contrast is from death to life, being born, the rebirth.

How about 4:7? *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."* It's a rather compelling statement, isn't it?

So Peter is telling us this—that spiritual excellence is the only confirmation and guarantee of your salvation. You've got to ask this.

Are those traits indicated in my life that give me the confirmation that I have of my faith?

How about 5:1 of 1 John? *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him."* Again the phrase is "born of God."

How about 5:4? *"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith."*

How about 5:18? *"We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning. But He who has been born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."* Seven traits of a person who has true saving faith. And Peter reminds us of this, that spiritual excellence, the desire to become more righteous, to become more Christlike, is the only

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guarantee of our salvation because it gives you the indication of this—that you have been born of God.

Let me give you those verses again. 2:29, 3:9, 3:14, 4:7, 5:1, 5:4, and 5:18. All of those contain the phrase “born of God.”

Now it’s interesting to notice that when you take the seven qualities that Peter talked about in 2 Peter chapter 2 verses 5-7, they begin to show themselves by the outward conduct which John wrote about in 1 John. Peter talked about those character qualities in verses 5-7—add those seven character qualities to your faith—that is what was manifested and recorded for us in the epistle of 1 John.

Number five would be this.

Participant: Bruce, may I ask a question?

Bruce: Please. Certainly.

Participant: The traits that concern me and which I struggle with are the ones in 3:9—makes or practices sin—and in 5:18—keeps on sinning. I believe that it’s also in 1 John where it says, “If we say we have no sin.”

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: Okay. There are sins I continue to do. Is this saying that after I recognize the sin and repent of it, then God gives me a new sin to think about? Or does that mean that I return to that sin? I mean, I guess I believe that I’m never going to go through this life not continuing to sin.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: Or keeping on sinning. And I’ve always found this for me personally—there may be others who have no problem with it—but I’ve always found it personally very troubling. And I’m not too sure what John is trying to say here because it just doesn’t match my experience. But then my experience may be so corrupt that others don’t have that problem.

Bruce: Well, Ted, I appreciate your honesty. We all have that problem.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I think the issue is this. If you weren’t troubled by it, there would be a problem.

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: If you weren’t troubled by it, you’d be in trouble.

Ted: Well sometimes I’m not especially troubled. (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: The point John is making is that we also have to look at 1 John 1:9. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* If you’re not troubled by your sin, and you keep repeating it, you’re in deep doo-doo. That’s the real issue that John is talking about. And so the question is that when I recognize my sin, what do I do with it? I confess it. God is pleased to remove that guilt from me. The penalty has already been paid. There can’t be double jeopardy. And He gives us the will to fight it out again. And the next time it rears its head, you are obviously more equipped to deal with it the second time around.

Eric Alexander, one of my mentors from Glasgow, Scotland, says this about repentance. “When you repent of your sin, and you confess your sin, the chain has been broken. Don’t resurrect it.” In other words, sometimes we go back and resurrect it. But we have to keep that in right balance. If you’re not concerned about your sin, then you’re in trouble.

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So I would say that the positive thing you're saying, Ted, is that you're troubled by it. And that's what John is trying to say so we can deal with it. And when we recognize that we do sin, we confess our sin. God is pleased to forgive us of our sin and cleanse us of all unrighteousness, which means that He gives you the will and the power not to want to do the same thing the next time. But you might do it, and again, what do you do? Confess it. Repentance is a way of life, men. Repentance is a way of life. It's not a one-time thing. Yes, Jay?

Jay: I think that one word which has been very helpful—not that I'm saying that this word helps me to sin less—but I'm just thinking of the word *practice*. Practice is a word that, if we look at our lives, are we practicing righteousness? Are we practicing that sin that we struggle with? All of us can examine ourselves and we have struggles. But with the word *practice*, there are many verses which talk about that in regard to our practice.

Bruce: Right. Yes, Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: Just to describe an example, I was recently at a meeting. I got kind of irritated with this guy because he dominated the whole meeting. It was all about himself. But then I got to thinking about it and I realized that one of the reasons I was ticked off was that I didn't get enough attention myself. *(Laughter.)* I thought, "There I am again."

Bruce: Absolutely. Good illustration.

Participant: but you'll never do that again, right?

Bishop Rodgers: Yeah, right. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: Yes, Dale?

Dale: I've got a short poem that I want to share.

Men: O-ohh!!

Ted: That really surprises me.

Dale: This is a thing that occurred on a tombstone in Massachusetts.

"To all of you who now pass by,
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, soon you will be.
So be prepared to follow me."

Now wait a minute. There's more! *(Laughter.)*

Because underneath it, somebody with a white piece of chalk had written:

"To follow you I'm not content
Till I find out which way you went."
(Laughter.)

Bruce: Sig, you need to get that down. *(Laughter.)*

The point of 1 John is this. If you say that you have no sin, then you're a liar and the truth is not in you. We have to deal with our sin. We have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. And these things are difficult issues. Peter is just reminding us that spiritual excellence requires some diligence. And we have to be diligent in our repentance.

Now there are besetting sins that keep reoccurring to me all the time. And one of the things that I've had to do recently in the last several years is that I've had to say something like this. "Satan, get behind me. Lord, replace those thoughts with Your grace. Would You remove those thoughts from my mind?" Then I recite some Scripture. It's a fight! So I have to say, "No, no, no!" The reason I say, "No, no, no," is because I'm reminding myself of my responsibility. It is

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my responsibility to fight, to say, "no!" And the next thing I know is that I don't have the resources to do that. So I have to say, "Satan, get behind me! Lord, would You remove those thoughts by Your grace and replace them with something from Scripture?" That's the fight that I have to go through personally when these besetting sins keep coming up. But I have to remind myself that I'm responsible to fight it out and to struggle with it. So it requires some diligence. Thomas?

Tom: It's also good to remember that this is also a process.

Bruce: Oh, absolutely!

Tom: As you grow in Christ and Scripture, you go through the process of giving up the old self. You want to put on the new man and take off the old self. It doesn't happen overnight.

Bruce: That's right.

Tom: But in Christ, by the grace of God, you grow out of it.

Bruce: Righteousness takes some time, men. Ted, thanks for bringing that up. That's very, very practical and I appreciate that.

The last one I would call your attention to, men, would be this. *Spiritual excellence will result in a glorious reward.* A couple of verses for you would be Matthew 25:34 and 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Transcriber's Note: Matthew 25:34. *"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"*

1 Corinthians 2:9. *"But as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.'"*

Now notice this. The ultimate reward will be to be in the presence of the One to whom you are being conformed. That's the ultimate reward. It's to be in the presence of the One to whom you are being conformed. Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. The ultimate reward is that we will be in the presence of the One to whom we are being conformed, and that is the Person of Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now let me just remind you of a couple of other things as we conclude this. And again I appreciate you bearing with me today because this is just something to remind us of things that we need to think about, as Peter talks about the divine life.

Life may be a struggle and oftentimes a battle. But if you are in Christ, remember these things. J. C. Ryle gives us these reminders. "Life may be a struggle and oftentimes a battle. But if you are in Christ, remember this. No soldiers of Christ are ever lost, missing, or left dead on the battlefield. Remember, earthly jewels sometimes get separated from their owner. Christ's jewels, never. Earthly jewels are sometimes lost. Christ's jewels, never. Earthly jewels are sometimes stolen. Christ's jewels, never." And of course the jewel is who? Us. It's us. Christ has never torn up a believer's birth certificate. (*Laughter.*) The question is, men, do you have one?

Participant: There you go.

Bruce: Do you have one? Those are just reminders. Peter says these things to remind us about the divine life. I appreciate your patience in all this, men. Today there was nothing new, just something we need to remind ourselves about.

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Let's pray. Father, thank You for these reminders, things that we should not forget, because if we don't recall these truths, we will never have our conduct reflect our application of these truths. Remind us that we are to think right before we act right. And when we act right, the feelings will be a consequence, not the cause. Father, thank You for the reminders of the Scripture that Peter has given us. And Father, we just thank You that You deeply call us to Yourself, and that we will work out our salvation with fear and trembling because You are the One who will work in us the will and the power to do it, and it will be for Your glory. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen." (*Applause.*)