

James T. Jeremiah
Spiritual Growth: The Surety of Salvation
October 29, 1984

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Thank you, Phil. It's great to be able to be sure of your salvation and know that all is well between you and God. Will you open your Bibles this morning to the first chapter of 2 Peter? I've been thinking about our theme, growing and going in light of our coming Lord or his return. I don't know of a better book in all the Bible to study to bring these two great truths together in relationship to the second coming, but in this letter.

James T. Jeremiah:

I want to read today a few verses at the beginning of the chapter. We're going to try to give you an outline of the chapter, and then we'll try to apply it as the spirit of God gives us the enablement. Let's read a few verses beginning with verse one, and then we'll pray together. Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our savior, Jesus Christ, grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

James T. Jeremiah:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that have called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, and beside this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue and to virtue, knowledge and to knowledge, temperance and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity.

James T. Jeremiah:

For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

James T. Jeremiah:

Father, use thy word today in our lives to challenge us concerning our responsibility, as well as our relationship, with the God who sent his son to die for our sins. Help us to see the importance of growing and going in the Christian life, as we anticipate the return of the Lord, Jesus Christ. In whose name, we pray. Amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

I do not need to tell anyone in this congregation that we are living in a day of great challenges. In all the days that I've lived and I've lived a few, I don't think there has ever been a time when the world out there needs the testimony and the living of young people and all of us connected with this institution and other schools like it. There is a great task to be carried on and a great responsibility to be undertaken.

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James T. Jeremiah:

The word of God gives us many challenges and encouragement as we face this kind of a time. Tomorrow morning, as the Lord directs, we're going to talk about the problems we face in this day with unbelief and denial of the faith, as we have to look upon it today, and as we face the future today. The book of Peter, or both letters written by Peter, are interesting in that they deal with trials. But the first letter starts out with an exhortation to grow. Grow in grace, we're told at the end of this letter, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

In the first letter, Peter says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." So here's a man who was facing trial and testing, and he is exhorting the people whom he writes to really get involved in growing. Growing up spiritually, going on for God, advancing in the spiritual life, not staying stagnant and idle and barren, but growing in the light of trial and testing and opposition and unbelief. Read the letters and you'll see how this is brought out in his messages.

James T. Jeremiah:

In 1 Peter, we have almost an illustration of the Israelites as they were wandering in the wilderness persecuted by the devil, who was the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. In 2 Peter, we have, if you please, the people in the land, facing opposition from the enemy from a different source, from a different way. I guess we could divide the book into three different parts as the chapters unfold before us.

James T. Jeremiah:

In chapter one, we see something about spiritual development. In chapter two, there is a great commentary on satanic deception. I believe in our time, students, we ought to be concerned about what we say, so far as biblical preparation for the deceptive doctrines that are being propagated in our time. Satanic deception is a reality. Then chapter three solves the whole problem because it deals with sudden destruction. These three chapters are chapters that ought to help us in a time like this.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now you will notice in this passage that we read this morning, in verse three, according as his divine power has given unto all things that pertain unto life and godliness, all things that pertain to life and godliness. Life is what God does in us, and that's supernatural. Godliness is God working through us, and that's supernatural, too. God in essence, profitable unto all things, we're told in 1 Timothy 4:8. We need to understand that we should be sound in doctrine, but also, the doctrine we have should produce something in our living.

James T. Jeremiah:

Redemption, by grace, produces responsibility in living. Possession of salvation could result in a godly practice among men. Salvation by grace should produce service, people who are working for God. Doctrine that's sound will develop into duty that honors God. Now in this chapter, there are three things that God says are provided for us so that we have enough from him to live in times like these.

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James T. Jeremiah:

First of all, he gives a description of his sufficient grace. We read about this in verses one to four. He speaks about our enlightenment, verses one and two. We've obtained like precious faith. Now everybody doesn't have the same kind of faith, the same size of faith. But every one who has the faith has the same faith, like diamonds are different in sizes and value. So faith can be that way, I suppose, in the life of a believer. But we have been enlightened by the knowledge of God through his righteousness.

James T. Jeremiah:

God's knowledge. Listen, we have begun to see the light by God working in us. He has given us knowledge through the word of God, that we might enjoy his sufficient grace. There are multiplied thousands of people outside of these walls in this world of ours that do not have what we as Christians have, the enlightenment that has been given to us by God's wonderful sovereign grace in opening up the truth, so that we have knowledge of our redemption.

James T. Jeremiah:

God has given us enablement, verse three. His divine power has given us all things. Think of it. With him, with Christ, he has given us all things. The incoming spirit is ours. The indwelling spirit is ours. The infilling spirit is ours. The outflowing spirit is ours. Everything we need to live for God has been given to us. Listen to me now. No one of us in this crowd today will ever be a cop-out in the Christian life because God has failed. Whatever comes in failure, whatever comes in copping out, so far as responsibility is concerned, is not God's fault.

James T. Jeremiah:

He has given us [inaudible] all things, to adore[?]. He has given his power to the believer. Aren't you glad of that? I will tell you without that, we wouldn't be able to take a step in the right direction spiritually, one step, let alone a whole life of them. He has given us a spiritual endowment in verse four. We're partakers of the divine nature. Given unto us. That word given has the idea of endowment. I remember in the early days of this school, there was always somebody who didn't want to give us accreditation because we didn't have endowment. We were glad in those days to have enough money to pay the bills without having some to put away in the bank to get interest.

James T. Jeremiah:

But God has given us as believers, endowment. He has given us his divine nature. We have been endowed with God's nature, the life of God. That's why we have eternal life because we have the eternal God's nature within the believer. That has been given so that we might escape the corruption that is in the world through us. God didn't save us by his power and give us eternal life to let us drift on in the same old way we were doing before we made the decision. Something happened, it must be, when Jesus came in and there is sufficient grace for life and for godliness, for holiness.

James T. Jeremiah:

Sometimes I think in our churches, we shy away from that word, holiness. But it's a good word. It is a word that means that we ought to be God-like and there's enablement for us to be that way in this world. If we fail, he doesn't fail. There is sufficient grace. Now, as you go on through these verses, you

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see that God's grace is sufficient. But the verses that follow point out two things, and that is there can be life without growth, and there can be knowledge without practice. Therefore, we must have not only sufficient grace, but we must concentrate on spiritual growth, giving all diligence. That is, make it your business to see to it that you're growing, says Peter. If you don't believe there's a need for it, wait till we study that second chapter. You'll see the need for it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Giving all diligence, make every effort, make it your business. I don't know of a better illustration than one I saw several years ago, when we were going over to Camp Patmos in Lake Erie for a Bible conference. A group of young people got on the boat as was the custom because we had our youth camp out there and still do. When they got on the boat, they somehow had been there before and they had taken with them loaves of bread. As they were going out into the lake toward Kelleys Island, they would throw out pieces of bread. The seagulls followed us almost all the way from Sandusky over to Kelleys Island.

James T. Jeremiah:

They threw out the bread and the seagulls would dive in and get it. Then they'd wait a minute. Some more would go. You know what the seagulls were doing? They were using diligence, making it their business to grab at the food that was provided for them by grace, if you please. Now, look, you can throw all the food out into Lake Erie you wanted to throw, but if the seagulls or the lake gulls or whatever they were, did not have enough ambition to go after it, it could never be made theirs.

James T. Jeremiah:

Listen, now. In this college, you have had the privilege and will have the privilege of being taught the word of God every day of your life. You can go through it academically and you can know all the answers and you can pass the tests and you can graduate. But if you don't show diligence and make the business of making it a part of your spiritual life, you can go on through here and miss what God has for you. God wants us to know something about spiritual growth. There is advancement in the Christian life.

James T. Jeremiah:

Notice that little word, add, verse five. besides this, giving all diligence, add. Now that's an interesting word. Now, I'm not going to pronounce the Greek word here for two reasons. Three reasons. Probably I'd pronounce it wrong. Then in our school, we have a Northern pronunciation of Greek, and we have a Southern pronunciation of Greek. We have the Grace people and the Dallas people, and the Dallas people have a Southern twist to their ... You know how it is.

James T. Jeremiah:

So I'm just going to tell you what the word means. In the Greek, it is a 12 letter word. It is a very interesting one because it has to do with more than just taking one thing and adding it to it and adding it to it. It has this meaning. Let me give it to you. It's a thrilling lesson, I think. Glen See, who wrote a book on the interpretation of the New Testament, has this to say about the word that in the original sense, it refers to the training and the staging of a grand chorus, for some high civic or provincial celebration, the entire expense being provided by some rich person.

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James T. Jeremiah:

Now, what it's saying to us as believers that our eyes then ought to be a grand chorus made up of these instruments. Virtue, courage, moral excellence, godliness, an attitude and conduct, brotherly kindness. We must sing together as members of a family. This is not adding one today and adding another tomorrow and adding another along the way. But it's making this chorus a part of our general daily experience. Then in this passage, he also deals with a matter of assurance. He deals in verses eight and nine with abnormality in the Christian life. Those who cannot see afar off, stunted, blind, abnormal.

James T. Jeremiah:

Listen, folks, we have to realize that in our day, there are people who have made a profession of Christ that haven't grown beyond babyhood, and they are 40 years or 50 years along in the pace. What has happened to them can happen to you if you don't, and I do not put into practice what God has provided for us and begin to grow as we ought to, in the light of the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ. He's coming soon. It may be today and we must never get away from that. What we do for him better be done now.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, he deals in verses 10 and 11 with assurance in the spiritual growth. Every once in a while we find people who say, "Well, I'm not sure." Here is a little secret of how we can be sure. He talks about an assured experience on earth. Make your calling and election sure. Now that may bother some people, but it's a proven fact. You've been called of God. You've been saved. Make it sure. That simply means just be sure your saved. It points back to the matter of adding to your faith.

James T. Jeremiah:

How can we be sure we're saved if all we have is the recognition we went forward in somebody's meeting, raised our hand and said a prayer? If all we have is that, the assurance is based in this scripture upon adding to what God has already done in growth. You don't see a growing Christian wonder if they're saved or not. Assured experience on earth. An obedient life leads to an assured heart. A lot of us are lacking assurance because we're not obeying what God has already told us to do.

James T. Jeremiah:

Assured experience on earth, that's wonderful, isn't it? Then he deals with an abundant entrance into heaven, verse 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give your calling the diligence to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Isn't it great to have assurance now, to know there is a coming as the children of God that we can have an abundant, abundant entrance into heaven.

James T. Jeremiah:

They tell me that in the Olympic games, when the victor would come home, after winning the victory, they would open a new gate into the wall in many of the cities to let him in. That's an abundant entrance. Our God isn't going to make a new entrance into heaven for you or me. But when that day comes and we faithfully serve him, we've been growing in grace, we've been serving him faithfully. When that day comes, there will be an abundant entrance and that glory place for us.

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James T. Jeremiah:

Signor Giuseppe Bartolo flew to New York City, got off of the plane as he left Italy, and got into New York. He looked for Montgomery Street. As he did so, he first of all, found a taxi cab driver that could understand Italian, I suppose. The man began to drive through that part of New York City where Montgomery Street was, according to his directions. They looked and they looked and they looked and they didn't find it. Finally, the driver said, "Let me see the letter." He gave a letter to the man and it was Montgomery Street in San Francisco.

James T. Jeremiah:

That reminds me of a lot of hope. So I'm guessing they're going to find the entrance into glory, but they're looking in the wrong place. Spiritual growth in the Christian life will produce assurance and confidence and it will help us to grow and go in the light of our savior's return. One last thing. We have in this passage, something about sufficient grace, something about spiritual growth. Somebody said, "Well, how am I going to make it? How can I do it?"

James T. Jeremiah:

God has put here in these verses something about a supernatural guide. Let's look at it now. Peter says, "Remember what I've been saying to you." In verse 15, "I will endeavor that you may be able after my departure, to have these things always in remembrance." Suppose Peter had had that word to say, and he'd given an oral communication of what he had to tell these people, and it wasn't written. If you want to how complicated oral tradition can be and how it can be twisted, if you want to read, for example, what happened to the flood story that had a common origin. But it was transmitted by oral means.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm glad I have something better than that. I'm glad I have something better than Simon Peter standing in this auditorium and telling me. Well, that'd be great. I'd be scared to death that he'd be here now. That's a long time ago. Then he said, in verse 16 of this passage, "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty at the transfiguration." He saw the transfiguration of Christ. But you have something more than that. Think of it. Those disciples, Peter and the others, standing and watching him transfigure. You have something better.

James T. Jeremiah:

In verse 18, he said, "And this voice which came from heaven, we heard." Why, the Lord God appeared in his and in his voice. He heard the voice from heaven. But you have something better than that. Here it is, verse 20. "Knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." You have the guide, the secrets, the stories, and so do I, that produces growth in the Christian life.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's knowing and obeying what this book says. Let me tell you, friend, that's better than oral tradition. That's better than having a vision. Oh, we have a lot of folks that are living on the basis of vision. It's amazing what visions they have. They drink warm milk before they went to bed. It may cure it. I don't

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know. I'm glad it's more than a vision. It's more than hearing a voice. It is the written word of the living God, given to us by our fathers who have told and told men, that they wrote what he wanted written without error.

James T. Jeremiah:

That's the basis of our faith and the source of our growth and the hope of our future and the strength for today. The ability to make your calling and election sure. Grow and go in the light of our coming Lord.

James T. Jeremiah:

Father in heaven, heal our hearts this morning. Tie these tools to our hearts, that we might see the importance of not being barren or idle or unfruitful or blind, so that we cannot see afar off and forget that we've been purged from our sins. Oh, God, help us to take seriously, what this chapter says about the Christian life, that we might be diligent in the light of our coming savior, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Speaker 2:

Thank you very much, Dr. Jeremiah. If there are people in the back that are standing, would you please be seated until we dismiss everyone? Thank you very much. We look forward to the remaining messages in the series, and we're adjourned.