

**January 2, 2011**

**“Resolution: Experience Revolution”**

**2 Peter 1:1-11 NLT**

Welcome on this first Sunday in a new year. Did you know that New Year's Day is the one holiday that is almost universal? It is the world's most observed holiday.

It is customary to make New Year's resolutions. I pray that one of your's is to be in worship each week. If it is, well so far so good!.

The late Erma Bombeck made some memorable resolutions over the years:

1. I will go to no doctor whose office plants have died.
2. I'm going to follow my husband's suggestion to put a little excitement into my life by living within our budget.
3. I'm going to apply for a hardship scholarship to Weight Watchers.
4. I will never loan my car to anyone I have given birth to.

Joke writer Ed McManus has some words of comfort for those of us who are setting resolutions: "Don't worry about [keeping] those 2011 News Year's resolutions," he says. "You only have to deal with them until the end of February and then you can give them up for Lent."

Resolutions are good, especially if there are changes we need to make in our lives. I heard about one poor guy who dialed his girlfriend and got the following recording: "I am not available right now, but thank you for caring enough to call. I am making some changes in my life. Please leave a message after the beep. If I do not return your call, you are one of the changes."

Missionary James King tells the true story of an African woman in one of his churches who attended every service accompanied by an old, mongrel dog. The dog would enter with the lady and sit beside her during the service. She always sat on an outside seat beside the aisle. At the conclusion of the service, the woman would always come and kneel at the altar for prayer, and the dog would faithfully take his place beside her. The woman's husband was a cruel man who deeply resented her devotion to Christ, and one day he beat her so severely that she died. He cruelly denied her a Christian funeral. After the woman's death and burial, only the man and dog were left. But the man noticed something unusual. The dog disappeared every Wednesday evening about 7:00 and didn't reappear for two hours. Every Sunday morning the dog likewise disappeared for a couple of hours.

One Sunday the man's curiosity was so aroused that he decided to follow and see where the dog went. Hurrying to keep up, the man followed the dog to the little church where this woman had worshipped so faithfully. He watched as the dog took its seat on the aisle while the service went on. At the close of the service, the dog went to the altar and took its place where the man's wife had prayed.

The man was so touched that he, too, went forward and gave his life to Christ.

Now the dog, says James King, comes to church with a new master.

We're beginning a new year. Wouldn't it be great if we could also begin a new life with a new Master like the owner of that dog?

Some of us are undoubtedly making resolutions for this New Year. Someone jokingly suggested that this year we make resolutions that we can actually keep. For example, gain weight. At least 30 pounds. Or stop exercising. Waste of time. Or read less. After all, it just makes you think. And watch more television. Then you won't have to think at all. Or procrastinate more . . . starting tomorrow. I think you will agree these are resolutions we can all keep.

But what if, instead of a resolution, we were to experience a revolution? Suppose we turned completely around with a new set of attitudes, a new set of motivations?

## 2 Peter 1:1-11 NLT

This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.

I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

**2** May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

**3** By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. **4** And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

**5** In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, **6** and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, **7** and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

10 So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. 11 Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**(v1a) Slave of Jesus Christ.**

This letter is written by Peter...yes, that Peter, the apostle of Jesus. He refers to himself as a “slave” or servant of Jesus Christ. Are you a servant / slave of Jesus Christ? That’s an important question for you to answer. A slave lives to please the one they serve; a slave lives to obey the one they serve. A slave is thought of in a negative sense when we think of someone being forced to work for another. But a slave of Jesus is somebody who humbly accepts His rule. Are you willing to serve Jesus Christ? Are you willing to give the control of your life over to His rule? A slave of Christ is subject to His will and always at His disposal. Do you have that kind of absolute devotion to Christ, willing to be subject to Him?

**(v1b) Precious faith in Jesus Christ**

Peter’s letter is written to those who share his precious faith in Jesus Christ and have the privilege of knowing Jesus. And the sources of his and our faith is the same source, the righteousness, justice, and fairness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Fairness means there is no favoritism there is an equal privilege given to all believers. Peter assures us that our faith is equal to that of the apostles, just as precious, and just as sure. He is also pointing out that what we have received from God is a gift; it was His choice, and not anything we did. (Note: Peter refers to Jesus as our *God* and our Savior. Peter had heard Jesus during His ministry on earth say that He and God were one).

**(v2) Abundance of grace and peace through Jesus Christ.**

In verse 2, Peter prays a blessing on us, that we who have come to know God through accepting Jesus would receive more and more of an abundance of grace and peace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God, and the peace he refers to is the peace we have with God because of the death of Christ on the Cross. Peter wants our faith to remain strong and steadfast and the only way it will is through a growing knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus Whom He sent. He is not referring to knowledge for knowledge sake. Knowledge must lead to changed behavior or godliness, which he talks about next.

**(v3a) Everything we need for living a godly life by the divine power of Jesus Christ.**

(v3a) By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.

Christ's power is to be manifested through our godly lives, and Christ has given us everything we need to live that kind of life. When we are born again, God by His Spirit empowers us to live godly lives (power to keep us from sin, and to live for Christ). We have received faith, grace, peace, knowledge, and divine power to live for God as we grow in our knowledge of Jesus. An intimate knowledge of Jesus gives us power for life and growth.

**(v3b) The marvelous glory and excellence of Jesus Christ.**

(v3b) We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. (His glory and goodness is what draws us to Him in the first place, and an intimate knowing of Him gives us power to live as He wants us to).

**(v4) Great and precious promises given by Jesus Christ.**

Through His glory and goodness He has given us everything we need for life and godliness and (v4) And because of his glory and excellence (goodness), he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature (we have His Spirit, the Holy Spirit) and (by His spirit in us we have power to) escape the world's corruption caused by human desires (as we live by His spirit and not by our sinful desires).

And that brings us to v5a In view of all this, (In view of what?)

That we are Slave of Jesus Christ, have a Precious faith in Jesus Christ, an Abundance of grace and peace through Jesus Christ, Everything we need for living a godly life by the divine power of Jesus Christ, The marvelous glory and excellence of Jesus Christ, and Great and precious promises given by Jesus Christ... In view of all this,

make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision...

Because of this, because of His gifts, and His promises make every effort to respond to God's promises by supplementing your faith.

To "make every effort" is a unique NT word. It means "to work along side of." While Christ gives us power, and the divine nature, we must make use of that power by making every effort to set aside our sinful desires and actively seek the qualities Peter is about to list. We are to use God's power *and* every ounce of determination to add to our faith if we are going to continue to become more and more like Christ. We need to supplement our faith. Mike Iarocci is a Certified Clinical Nutritionist. He gives me

advice on my health and one of the things he has advised me to do is to take supplements to add to a healthy diet. My diet is not giving me all I need and so I must add supplements besides so I will be fully supplied. That is what Peter is advising we do with our faith and he says to add to it with a “generous” provision.

Now let’s get to Peter’s list. First let me point out that the starting point is Faith. Without faith we are just like everyone else in the world. The faith Peter is referring to is faith in Christ, faith that brings us into the family of God. People in the world can have some of the following characteristics that Peter lists, but only faith in Jesus will give us Eternal Life. So, while it is to our advantage to add the following characteristics, the characteristics alone will not get us into heaven, only faith in Jesus and His grace will do that.

But Christians are not to stop at faith alone. Like James, Peter knew that faith without works is dead. Believers have work to do. Here’s Peter’s list:

Supplement your faith (he starts off saying) with a generous provision of moral excellence

1. **Moral excellence (v5a)** means a high moral standard that exceeds those who are not followers of Christ. To their faith believers are to add a lifestyle that mirrors Christ’s. Jesus is our example and our motivation. Get rid of anything immoral or any appearance of something that is immoral. Add to your faith moral excellence and supplement that with...**Knowledge**
2. **Knowledge (v5b)** here does not refer to the knowledge of Christ that leads to salvation, rather, here it is that knowledge that leads to wisdom and discernment that enables believers to live godly lives. It’s described in ...

Ephesians 5:17 - Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.

Philippians 1:9 - I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding.

Hebrews 5:14 - Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

Moral excellence will lead to knowledge – knowing God and His Word better which will add wisdom and discernment to our lives. But to knowledge we must add self-control...

3. **Self-control (v6a)** refers to mastery over sinful desires in every aspect of our lives. The things mentioned so far are vital to a changed life: faith in Christ,

adding goodness or moral excellence, and the knowledge to apply God's wisdom to specific situations. Because we know Jesus, and His will, and want the good moral things He wants, we have to add self-control or self-discipline. The power of self-discipline is amazing. Nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished without self-discipline or self-control. What ever happened to self-control? America is becoming flabby, we want only what comes easy. Peter explained that believers are saved so that they can grow to resemble Christ. God wants to produce the character of His Son, Jesus, in us, His people. But this demands discipline and effort. Our knowledge of Christ should naturally lead to self-control. What are your weak points? Pray to God for help; perhaps share your weaknesses with a trusted friend who will join you in praying for God's help to change a weakness into strength. That will mean that you will have to add to self-control, patient endurance...

4. **Patient endurance (v6b)** is the ability to steadfastly endure suffering and evil without giving up your faith. When you are making every effort to be self-controlled or self-disciplined and you are patiently enduring because of your faith in God's goodness and control of that happens in your life then that will lead to godliness...
5. **Godliness (v6b)** is what should characterize the life and conduct of believers in Christ. It refers to the corrects attitude toward God and people. Godliness describes an awareness of God in all of life — a lifestyle that exemplifies Christ and is empowered by Him (the same word is used in v3). Christians must have a right relationship with God and right relationships with fellow believers. Therefore godliness leads to brotherly affection...
6. **Brotherly affection (v7a)** is the Greek word, Philadelphia, which means "brotherly love". It is an especially intense love that considers others as brothers and sisters. John explained the connection between godliness and brotherly kindness this way: 1 John 4:20-21- If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

There must be a concerned caring for the family of God and to that we add a love for everyone...

7. **Love for everyone (v7b)** is the Greek word Agape and refers to self-sacrificial love, the kind of love God demonstrated in saving us. We need to love one another in the family of God, and we need to love all people.

(vv8-11) The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But

those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Faith must be more than belief in certain facts; it must result in action, growth in Christian character, and the practice of moral discipline, or it will die away. Because God has saved us, and given us His divine nature, and power, and great and precious promises, we must make every effort to add to our faith. These actions do not come automatically; they require hard work. They are not optional; all of them must be a continual part of the Christian life. We don't finish one and start on the next, but we work on them all together. God empowers and enables us, but he also gives us the responsibility to learn and to grow. Let's live for the future, and I don't mean just 2011, but for our entrance one day into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.