

Bible Character: Peter

Why did Jesus refer to Peter as “the rock” (Matt. 16:18)? He knew that Peter was well grounded, with good roots and a healthy trunk (strength of the Lord). Let’s look at what made Peter strong and stable in 2 Peter 1.

- A bond servant of Jesus Christ (v. 1).
- Relied on God’s power vs. his own (v. 3).
- Understood and relied on God’s promises (v. 4).
- Pursued moral excellence and other godly characteristics (vs. 5 – 9).
- Was quick to speak and teach God’s truth (vs. 12, 15).
- Upheld God’s word as undeniable truth (vs. 19 – 21).

1. **A Mighty Redwood inhabits sheltered, well-watered places of rich soil.**

Where do you find your nourishment; what values are you cultivating?

Fertile Soil

(See “Discretion in Relationships” verses)

“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.....” (2 Peter 3:18a)

Peter suggests two primary ingredients of fertile, growth-producing soil: God’s grace and His knowledge. God makes these ingredients available to us (they’re free) in order to nurture us and cause us to grow.

A healthy trunk is the life source to the branches. When the trunk falters in delivering water and nutrients to the branches, all systems shut down. Needless to say no amount of photosynthesis or other external stimuli can overcome an unhealthy trunk. Whereas the center of a tree’s trunk is the pith, and the annular rings (growth rings) emulate from this center, the center of a Christian’s life is the heart, and all godly growth begins here. When God’s soil amendments (grace and knowledge) treat the heart, a strong, healthy trunk is formed.

Grace

This is God’s favor – free, unmerited, and abundant. It is unmatched as a growth enhancer! It enters the heart of man and forms the center of a strong, upright trunk.

Knowledge

Knowledge is the blood that flows through our veins – the life cells of the trunk. Spiritual knowledge is only given by God. In Christ *“are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (Col. 2:3).

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.....wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul” (Prov. 2:6, 10)

ASK GOD FOR IT! *“.....we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”* (Col. 1:9)

2. **A Mighty Redwood contains natural decay-resisting resins.**

There is no known insect that can destroy a redwood tree, which is infused with tannin.

Is God’s Spirit free to preserve you? Consider God’s word:

- *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”* (1 Peter 5:8-9)
- *“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:7)
- *“.....greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”* (1 John 4:4b)
- *“Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”* (Eph. 6:13)
- *“so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world”* (Phil. 2:15)

- *“Hate evil, you who love the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.” (Ps. 97:10 NASB)*
- *⁷ You, O LORD, will keep them; You will preserve him from this generation forever.
⁸ The wicked strut about on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men. (Ps. 12:7-8 NASB)*

3. **A Mighty Redwood has *thick bark* that provides excellent fire-resistance.**

Is your ‘shield of faith’ intact? What happens when we “play defense” on our own?

- *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12 NASB)*
- *“in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.” (Eph. 6:16 NASB)*

For Contemplation

Where do you find your nourishment? (See “Fertile Soil” on page 3)

- What can cause a tree planted in good fertile soil to fail to grow strong?
“But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” (Luke 8:15)
- In like manner, what can cause a believer to experience bad spiritual health and slow growth?
“⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom 8:5-6)

For Discussion

Group 1. What values are you cultivating?

- Share how you pray for your children or grandchildren to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.....*” (2 Peter 3:18a).
- Share a time when God gave you “*all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*” (Col. 1:9)

Group 2. Is God’s Spirit free to preserve you? (See “decay resisting” on page 3)

- Name a few “decay resisting” elements in a healthy, stable Christian’s life.
- In your “forest”, how do you spot “decay” in the trees around you?

Group 3. Is your “shield of faith” intact? (See “thick bark” on page 4.)

- How do you distinguish between “faithful are the wounds of a friend” and “deceitful are the kisses of an enemy” (Prov. 27:6)?
- If someone is attacking your character, as in Mat. 5:22 (‘Raca’ and ‘You fool’), is the attack most certainly from the enemy? If so, what is your best defense?

Next Time: The Silent Killer / *The Necessity of a Grateful Heart*