

Theme: Faith in Exile

Title: Do the Math - II Peter 1:5-15

Aim: Emphasize our part in partaking of the divine nature.

Intro: I used to do fairly well in Math, even enjoyed it. I guess I could get use to the various versions of the new math, but I don't want to! But as long as they don't "change the rules" it should be ok, however you learn to add, subtract, multiply & divide. Math is God's design, & in spite of the means used, $2 + 2$ is always going to be 4, as long as you're working w/the base 10 or decimal system. Did you know that there is such a thing as spiritual mathematics? Think about it: God takes away our sin by adding them to Christ on the cross. We are to multiply by winning others to Christ, tho we can only do it one at a time. What God doesn't want is division, or for that matter fractions. We are urged to work hard to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). In our text today, Peter introduces us to spiritual addition for the believer. Theme: Faith in exile. We who are followers of Christ are exiles in a world not our own. How do we live as Christian exiles? Peter has told us already that God, by "His divine power has granted to us all things pertaining to life & godliness..." He has given us everything we need to live the Christian life. It all comes thru the true knowledge – correct & precise – of God, who has "called us to His own glory & excellence, giving to us precious, great promises thru which we become partakers of the divine nature. As said last week, God has given to us who believe a perfect salvation, justification, forgiveness of sin, new life in Christ, His Holy Spirit w/in, His Word to guide us, the Church to support us, access into His presence, the sweet communion of prayer, the power unleashed in prayer, etc. He continued – II Peter 1:5-15 [READ]. How do we partake of the divine nature – become more like Christ, fit for His kingdom? I) **Do the Math** – Peter calls for us to do some spiritual addition. "For this very reason" – because God has given us what we need to live the Christian life; because God has called us to His own glory & excellence; because He has given us great/precious promises to save those who call upon His name & complete what He has

started, etc. Because His design & promise is that we become partakers of the divine nature; because He has done all this & more, we are to make every effort to supplement our faith. Now we can participate & cooperated w/God in His sanctifying work. But don't misunderstand, we can't make ourselves more like Christ – God the Holy Spirit must do it & will. Our part is like that of a small child working w/father or mother on a project, whether carrying a heavy load or making a meal. The child wants to help & can, but the parent is really doing all the work. A child is taught to do things by allowing them to help, but they could not do it by themselves despite the amount of effort. A child of God is the same. God the Holy Spirit will enable us to do the spiritual math. We are to “make every effort,” which means working hard & being intentional, giving deep thought to. Spiritual growth doesn't just happen. Left to ourselves we'll do the spiritual slide. We must give attention to our walk & growth, think about becoming more like Christ, pray about being more like Christ, aim to be more like Christ. And, as David Gudzik wrote, “The scope of the list demonstrates that God wants us to have a well-rounded Christian life, complete in every fashion.” II) **We're to supplement our faith**, which God has given us as a gift. To supplement means to “bring in besides” or “contribute alongside.” The 1st characteristic Peter mentions to be brought alongside our faith is **virtue**. This is the same word used in verse 3, saying that God has called us to His own glory & excellence. Virtue is excellence – specifically moral excellence – purity. God is perfectly pure; Christ on earth lived a pure, righteous life. We're called to purity! But don't you know that those exiles in Asia Minor, being confronted almost daily w/an impure culture, needed to be intentional about being morally pure? And it hasn't gotten any better! We've got to think about moral purity & prayerfully aim for it, or we'll be dragged into the immoral abyss around us. Praise God for the promise of I John 1:9 – ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** We're to supplement virtue w/**knowledge** – deeper, more perfect knowledge, enlarged knowledge, particularly of God & of following

Christ as Lord. We've said that knowledge of God transforms us. So, if we would grow, we must know Him more. Read/study the Word of God as a mechanic would read/study a manual of a vehicle/machine he/she wanted to repair, as a teacher would read/study the lesson he/she wanted to teach. We have to be intentional about gaining knowledge of God & being a faithful Christian. We're to supplement knowledge w/**Self-control** – temperance – “the virtue of one who masters his desires & passions, especially sensual appetites.” What do you need to control? We live in a world that's out of control. Everyone is encouraged to be what you want, do what you want; anything goes. But we're called to moral excellence, to Christ-likeness, to purity, so we must control ourselves, or better yet, be under the Holy Spirit's control. The good thing is, self-control is one of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:23), so we know that if we're under His influence we will have self-control. But again, we have to prayerfully think about exercising self-control & make choices being led by the Spirit, saying no to that to which we ought to say no & yes to what is good/right. We're to supplement self-control w/**steadfastness** – constancy, endurance – “the characteristic of one who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose & his loyalty to faith & piety by even the greatest trials & sufferings.” Steadfastness is “stick-to-it-tiveness,” not giving up or giving in, being stable in an unstable world. This was certainly something needed by those exiles in Peter's day. It's certainly something needed by Christian exiles today – determination to stay w/God, to abide in Christ, to continue to follow & serve the Lord Jesus, no matter what others do. “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back. Tho none go w/me, still I will follow, no turning back!” We're to supplement steadfastness w/**godliness** – that piety towards God, honoring God w/your life, respect, reverence toward God. Godliness is living w/God in mind, knowing that He sees all & knows your life. Obviously, as w/all these characteristics, godliness is counter-cultural. It doesn't look like the world in which we live. But it will point others to Jesus! We're to supplement godliness w/**brotherly affection**. It won't surprise you that in the Greek that is “Philadelphia” – not just a

city in Pennsylvania! Philadelphia is “love & affection for bros/sis,” & especially as far as the Church is concerned it is “the love which Christians cherish toward each other as brethren.” We shouldn’t have to but we do need to think about loving & caring for each other in Christ. We have a special bond w/every believer in the world but we are to especially love the bros/sis in Christ w/whom God has placed us. How imp that was for those exiles, scattered far from home & family, to recognize fellow believers – children of God - as their family in their new home, & to care for each other as family. In today’s world we surely need each other & need to care for each other & lean upon one another, helping each other grow & serving together, being about our Father’s business together. We’re to supplement brotherly affection w/love. It’s interesting that Peter listed both brotherly love & love – agape. We understand “agape” as self-sacrificing love, the kind of love God showed to us in the sacrifice of His Son on our behalf. That’s the kind of love we’re not only to show each other in Christ, but to all. These exiles were being called not to hunker down & hide away from those around them, but to engage the culture w/the love of God. Aren’t we called to do the same? How do we live as exiles in a world not our own? It’s not easy to love those who flaunt ungodliness & no control & no virtue & no love before us. Obviously we need God to love through us. III) **It all adds up** – vs8. Peter said that if these qualities/ characteristics are ours & are increasing – being augmented little by little – if we’re growing in these, then, in Gudzik’s words, it will be “evident to everyone that we are not barren nor unfruitful in our knowledge of Jesus.” It’s interesting that Peter took this “negative-side” approach. “They will keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I wonder if he had some insight, perhaps from reports he had received, that those exiles were being ineffective & unfruitful in their witness for Christ. Perhaps they weren’t loving each other or living godly lives. The difference Jesus makes wasn’t evident in them. Or perhaps some of them thought of themselves, “Who am I to try to be a witness? Who am I to try to teach others about

Christ or the Christian life?” Maybe you think the same way. But if we’re growing in these Christ-like qualities, Jesus will show through. Our growing in the knowledge of Jesus, our growing in the process of following Him will add up to Jesus being seen in us & others being pointed to Him. That’s why we’re here. We’ll look at the rest of this passage next week. That challenge for us today is to intentionally think about our Christian walk, intentionally aim to be more like Him, which means growing in moral virtue, knowledge of Him, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, & love. If we’re growing in those ways, our faith in Christ will be evident for others to see. It will mean a countercultural life & it will take faith. Faith in exile.+