

True Christians Must Know and Grow (2 Peter 1:1-11)

The series of articles that follows was born of a thought presented in a sermon entitled: *Being A Christian*. In that sermon, it was suggested that the ultimate Christian responsibility was to grow. The series will take us one by one through eight qualities that a Christian should strive to possess. We will learn that these eight qualities are not a buffet for us to select from as we please, but instead, a list of qualifications that a maturing Christian needs to attain.

The purpose in attaining these qualities is to demonstrate our personal diligence in *making our calling and election sure* (2 Pet. 1:10). Peter spends all of chapter 2 of this short letter warning us of falling under the influence of false teachers and their damnable doctrines. If a person fully commits his life to Christ and pursues the qualities presented in this series, it is doubtful he will succumb to false teaching.

The Christian Life Begins With Faith (2 Peter 1:1-5a) by Carey Dillinger

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust. Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue... (ASV)

This Faith Is In a Person

Peter addresses this letter *to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. The faith that Peter's readers had was not just some "better felt than told" emotional concept, but instead a deep-rooted system of belief in God the Father and God the Son. Those of us today that choose to adopt this system of belief as our own will also have access *unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness...*, but only if we have a true knowledge of God and the Savior. The grace that pardons and sanctifies us will only come through this true knowledge. This knowledge will additionally bring the peace of conscience, reconciliation with God, and calmness of life in the face of trials.

This Faith Involves God's Power

We will be properly spiritually supplied through God's power. He manifests that power through the Word. It is through the Word that we come to believe that God's revelation is sufficient for our every spiritual need. God guarantees our access *unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness...*, which is our assurance that every need will be supplied. In this context "'life' refers to the spiritual vigor that the soul possesses; 'godliness' to the conduct necessary to preserve and maintain it." (Woods)

How will we be supplied? *Through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue...*, that is, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In John 17:3, Jesus prayed that "*all flesh may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent.*" In the previous verse Jesus indicates that He had been given all authority, which includes the ability to give eternal life. God's power, through Jesus Christ, is the guarantee of our faith.

How will his "*own glory and virtue*" call us...? The resurrection of Christ from the dead indicates God's omnipotence and Christ's "glory and virtue." It is by the Word of Jesus Christ that the call goes out for those with open minds. (See Eph. 1:17ff.)

This Faith Involves God's Promises

The glory and virtue of Christ grants us "*precious and exceeding promises.*" These promises are **precious** because of what they mean to our soul. They are **exceeding** because they include forgiveness, peace, the promise of eternal life, and a chance to be partakers of the Divine Nature. As partakers of the Divine Nature we become partners with God, His Son, and His Spirit in their Holy Character. It is only by partaking in this Divine Nature that we are given an escape from the corruption of the world.

This Faith Involves Our Participation

Because of the importance of obtaining the exceeding and precious promises, we should *be adding on* (our) *part all diligence.* The Greek word for adding (*pareisenegkantes*) literally means, "bringing in by the side of." The message to us as followers of Christ is clear: God supplies the exceeding and precious promises and He expects us to bring along side some things of our own. Of course our paltry contributions will not measure up to God's, but nevertheless they are necessary. The very fact that we are to "*give diligence to add...*" implies that there is something in addition to that which God has supplied which He expects us to supply. Repeatedly we see that God's promises are conditional and we must add our part to His part to make the promises functional.

What does this "diligent adding" involve? It is the express purpose of this series of articles to teach exactly what God expects us to "bring alongside" His promises to make them function on our behalf. The foundation of our participation in "the faith" is our faith. We must pursue these virtues diligently. Diligence involves an alignment of priorities and a tenaciousness of spirit. We must be focused on the goal and pursue it until it is accomplished.

The Hebrew writer (Heb. 11:6) says, "*without faith it is impossible to please God.*" Faith is the foundation on which all the other virtues are built. Faith must be more than just mental assent or it would not support the weight of the other virtues to come. It must be a lively, working faith, which will grow to become a system of belief that will not be compromised regardless. Paul told the Philippians, "*Work out your own salvation... For it is God which worketh in you.*" (Phil. 2:12,13.) As with any building the ground must be prepared before the foundation can be laid. It is up to us to provide God with a place to build. The parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:1-9, 18-23) relates the types of ground that are available. What type are you?

Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Peter 1:5-7)

Virtue (2 Peter 1:5) by Allan McNabb

The apostle Peter commands, "add to your faith virtue" (NKJV, 2 Pet. 1:5). The New American Standard Version translates this Scripture saying, "in your faith supply moral excellence." "Virtue," in Second Peter 1:5, means "moral excellence" or "moral goodness." The aim of this article is to explain the virtuous character that Christians must possess.

Virtue begins with becoming a Christian

Moral excellence begins with diligent faith (2 Pet. 1:5). Since faith demands hearing and obeying God's word (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:1f), the first step toward moral excellence is obedience to God in repentance from sin, confession of Christ, and baptism into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:37-38; Rom. 6:3).

At the time we repent, we turn away from sin to obediently serve God. Therefore, we are baptized making our appeal to God for a good conscience (1Pet. 3:21). With a good conscience, we begin a morally excellent life. Unbelievers, on the other hand, are not morally excellent since they do not believe and have not appealed to God for a good conscience.

God's word sets the standard for morality, virtue

Virtue is moral excellence. God is absolute virtue (excellence, 2 Pet. 1:3). Therefore, God sets the standard for virtue. Since God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), He has given us the standard for moral excellence in His word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Society dictates neither morality nor virtue. We cannot live by the world's standard of morality and expect to go to heaven (Is. 55:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:18f). A virtuous life is the result of hearing God's word, believing God's word, and obeying God's word (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 5:9). When we live according to the law and doctrine of Christ, we are virtuous (Gal. 6:2; Col. 3:17; 2 Jn. 9).

Christians grow spiritually, in virtue

As a babe in Christ, we feed upon the pure milk of the word and begin growing spiritually (1 Pet. 2:2). As growing babes, we thoroughly learn the first principles and move on to perfection (Heb. 5:12f; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). As we grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5), we change our lives to live according to all that we know about God and His will. Every time we change to better serve God, we become more virtuous.

As we grow spiritually, we grow in:

- ◆ Faith (2 Pet. 1:5). Therefore, we become increasingly virtuous.
- ◆ Knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5). Therefore, we become increasingly virtuous.
- ◆ Self-control (2 Pet. 1:6). Therefore, we become increasingly virtuous.
- ◆ Perseverance (2 Pet. 1:6). Therefore, we become increasingly virtuous.
- ◆ Godliness (2 Pet. 1:6). Therefore, we become increasingly virtuous.

- ◆ Brotherly kindness (2 Pet. 1:7). Therefore, we become increasingly virtuous.
- ◆ Love (2 Pet. 1:7). Therefore, we become increasingly virtuous.

Christians meditate on virtuous things

A Christian's life is a life of virtue (2 Pet. 1:5). Therefore, Paul commands us to think on things that are virtuous (Phil. 4:8). We cannot allow our minds to dwell upon evil and expect to live virtuously before God. "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Cor. 15:33). If our mind is in the gutter, we cannot live a virtuous life.

Christians can never escape all of the negative influences of sin (1 Cor.5:9ff). Nevertheless, we must work very hard to keep from dwelling on the sin that surrounds us as we interact with people of the world. We can never allow ourselves to gleefully entertain the pleasures of unrighteousness in our minds (2 Th. 2:11-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-4). To do so is sin (cf. Matt. 5:27-30).

Virtue is more valuable than worldly wealth

Solomon said, "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies" (Pr. 31:10).

Solomon's rhetorical question implies that a virtuous woman is extremely difficult to find. This is not just applicable to women, but virtuous people in general are difficult to find. In the time of Noah, there were only eight virtuous people on the earth (1 Pet. 3:20). Moreover, Jesus tells us that few people will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14) denoting that only a few virtuous people will ever live on earth.

A virtuous wife is worth much more than rubies. We have an abundance of rubies compared to the number of virtuous women on the earth. Therefore, a virtuous woman far outweighs the value of rubies. Generally speaking, virtue is more valuable than worldly wealth. A virtuous life results in eternal life, but worldly wealth is temporal (cf. Matt. 6:19-21; Ja. 5:1-6).

We will behold God's absolute virtue

Absolute virtue (excellence) is possessed by God (2 Pet. 1:3). As God's children, we strive to imitate Him every day (cf. Matt. 5:48).

One day, Christians will behold absolute perfection and virtue in heaven while worshiping before God's throne. Take a moment and think about your life. Are you a virtuous person? Will you eternally live in the midst of absolute virtue while worshiping before God's throne? Or, will you only get a brief glimpse of God's virtue as you stand condemned before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10)?

Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Peter 1:5-7)

Knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5c) by Charles Nicks

"Knowledge is power" so says Opie (Ron Howard) of *The Andy Griffith Show*. As we continue to consider all of the virtues we must add to our faith, we realize the necessity of true growth in our spiritual life. It is necessary. Do you find it interesting that we are commanded to add to our faith knowledge? It has been my experience that more than a few men and women in the church think that after obeying the Gospel continuing to learn is optional not mandatory. What does the Bible say?

Adding Knowledge Is A Requirement Not an Option

Let us return to the original commandment given the apostles found in Matthew 28:18-20; *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Jesus in His command laid down the principle of adding to your faith knowledge.

The Kind of Knowledge Added Is Not an Option

While we have this passage before us, we should take careful note that the **kind** of knowledge we add to our faith is very important. Jesus, our King said, **"teaching them to observe ALL things I have commanded you."** The **kind** of knowledge we add to our faith **is all that Jesus commanded**, nothing more, less or else. The kind of knowledge added to our faith is not opinion. The kind of knowledge added to our faith is not born of human tradition. The kind of knowledge added to our faith cannot come from creeds or a catechism. Consider this warning: *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house or greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."* (2 Jn. 9-11)

In Paul's second inspired letter to Timothy he wrote, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like a cancer."* (2 Tim. 2:16-17a.) In order for Timothy, you, or me to study and rightly divide the truth we must gain knowledge. Without knowledge, we can fall victim to vain babblings, which spread and destroy like cancer. Neither of us can afford such an end!

The Value of Knowledge

We often look to the apostles for our examples, as well we should. Paul in his letter to the saints in Christ at Philippi teaches us something about the value of knowledge as well as what we all must do in order to gain a proper knowledge of Christ Jesus. *"But **what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count **all things** loss for the excellence of***

the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." (Phil. 3:7-8) Paul before his conversion was the feared Saul of Tarsus. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; concerning the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal persecuting the church; blameless according to the Law of Moses. He had a lot that was gain to him. Paul states he **"..gave it all up."** Some never succeed as a Christian because they never give up **all** their former religious beliefs, traditions, or worldly habits when they obey the Gospel of Christ.

Recall in Acts 15, *"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'"* The problem: they failed to **give up** all their religious traditions when they were baptized for the remission of their sins! The same thing happens today. Folks bring their denominational ideas and opinions with them and try to make them the doctrine of the New Testament Church! This will never work. A good example of this would be the celebration of Christmas as a holy day.

Why do you suppose one would want to do such a thing? In one word, VALUE. That is right value! Some put more value on their former religious traditions, those things mother and daddy believed in than they do the Gospel of Christ! Paul counted all things as **rubbish or dung** in order to gain Christ. In addition, folks do not want to give up the things of this world in order to live successful Christian lives. *"Do not love the world or the things in the world, if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."* (2 Jn. 2:15-17)

The inspired command is simple, easy to read and understand. **Do not love the world or the things in the world.** We cannot love the world and maintain a love for our heavenly Father at the same time. Some who are reading this article are trying to love both and it is not working is it?! Jesus said, a couple of things along these lines it would do well to remember. First, we cannot serve God and mammon, (things of this world). Why? Jesus said you would love the one and hate the other. Do you want to argue with Jesus on that point? Second, Jesus said, *"If you love Me, keep my commandments."* How do you know the difference between mammon, tradition, and Jesus commandments...? **KNOWLEDGE!**

Lack Of Knowledge Will Cost You Your Salvation

Do you find it curious that men and women who understand the value of knowledge are willing to say (and I believe they mean it) "Yes, I love Jesus...but in all honesty I don't know what the Bible teaches when it comes to the Gospel of Christ." Ignorance will cause you to be lost eternally. Please consider the following; *"...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not **know** God, **and** on those **who do not obey the Gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."* (2 Thess. 1:7-9) You cannot obey what you do not know, can you.

So, dear reader, add to your faith, **knowledge!**

Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Self-control (2 Peter 1:6a) by H. Scott Owen

In the King James Version 2 Peter 1: 6 instructs us to add TEMPERANCE to our knowledge. Through many years of change that word came to be associated almost exclusively with sobriety. While that would certainly be included, Paul had more in mind in Acts 24: 25 when he responded to Felix concerning righteousness and TEMPERANCE and judgment. Later versions of the scripture render our word as SELF-CONTROL. Other references in this article will be taken from the American Standard Version.

In order to practice self-control we will of course learn and use discipline. The very idea of “self” in self-control introduces a difficulty which we all must acknowledge. If we try to accomplish a conduct acceptable to God on our own, we will be disappointed. Discipline has to do with the control of our mind and in exercising this we must depend on the help of God. To Timothy Paul said in 2 Timothy 1: 7 that God gave us a spirit “*of power and love and discipline.*” We acknowledge our own deficiency in the singing of the Martin Luther hymn, A MIGHTY FORTRESS, “Did we in our own strength confide Our striving would be losing...” We just cannot do it alone!

Some students of the scriptures believe that there is a natural progression of these graces leading as it were steps from one to the other. There is logic for this conclusion although others see them as just random. Nevertheless, we know that there are steps in gaining self-control. It does not just happen, it is something that we must grow into, and as Paul has said, God helps us do so. He grants us the control of our mind by which we can control our actions. Let us look at some steps toward self-control.

Subdue Our Natural Personality.

There are at least two extremes that we observe: the overly aggressive and the overly shy. We are generally more irritated by the former and it is the more unsettling in a congregation. In Matthew 5: 5 Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*” Perhaps he had both the extremes in mind and is saying, “your personality needs to be under God’s control.”

In fashioning one to serve as a leader in a congregation Paul is inspired to write Timothy and Titus concerning these personality traits. “*No brawler, no striker, not contentious, but to be temperate, sober-minded, self-controlled*” among other qualities. Overcoming that “know-it-all-can’t be wrong” attitude seen in some. However, at the same time remember his request that the Ephesians pray that he might speak with “*boldness*” in 6:19. Just keeping quiet is not always wisdom. It might be an uncontrolled shyness that is also to be overcome. In all ways to put ourselves under God’s control.

Submit Ourselves To God.

In Romans 12:1,2 we are instructed to “...*present ourselves unto God...and not be conformed to the world...*” However, the details of how we do this are not always appreciated by us and it is where we need our self-control the most. We note a few of the details.

Micah 6:8 What Jehovah requires is that we “...*do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God.*”

Matthew 22:37-39 Love God with all our heart, soul and mind and our neighbor as our self.

While these commands and others like them are quite comprehensive, we sometime need something that is more on a day-by-day nature in order for us to see the real meaning. So often when we speak of submission we are in the areas of child to parent, wife to husband, citizen to government, and may let ourselves overlook Paul’s statement in Ephesians 5:21, “*subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ.*” We deceive ourselves if we think we can submit to God, and serve Him, without doing the same to our brethren first and to some degree our fellow man. Which really leads to the next step.

Surrender Our Personal Rights.

For over 30 years now our entire society has been bombarded with something we call our rights. Seminars, sermons, lawsuits, etc. abound in an effort to protect us from their loss. We should note that nothing in God’s word is intended to make us feel useless or without value. Let us remember that Jesus died for us and that God gave His dear Son for our sakes. This however brings us to one of the most important realizations of the Christian life. I belong to another as Paul instructs in First Corinthians 6:19,20 “...*not your own...bought with a price.*” Our greatest challenge then is to make the will of God our will. That is what Jesus did in bearing His cross. That is what we are to do in being like Him. This is true self-control and it cannot be accomplished apart from Him.

To maintain self-control we must exercise constant discipline and should always look for any signs of weakness. Things like the wrong motivation, or anger that is not required, or disappointment with our life in which we see God at fault, or a critical spirit where my brother is involved, and such like.

If there is a natural progression of these graces, then when we have let the Spirit help us through the word be in control of our self, it will lead us to the patience by which we can truly “wait on God.”

Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Endurance (2 Pet. 1:6b) by Barry Hudson

Many people fall in their Christian life for one reason: they quit, they drop out, and they fail to stick with it. However, Peter tells us in 2 Pet. 1 that if we practice all the wonderful qualities listed in verses 5-7, we *"will never stumble"* (2 Pet. 1:10). If we fail to diligently endure, we are going to fall.

Endurance comes from a compound Greek word: hupo (under) + meno (to remain). Literally, it means endurance under pressure, under testings, under trials. If we learn to stick with it when troubles, trials, discouragement and difficulties come into our lives, there are three wonderful results.

Endurance Brings Perfection

James tells us to *"count it all joy when we are encompassed by manifold trials"* (1:2). James is talking about a joy that is able to look beyond the obstacle, problem or difficulty mid see the opportunity to become more like Jesus. This can only be done by faith, seeing beyond the visible and looking to the invisible, spiritual things of God.

As Christians, we should have grown to the point that we know that the *"testing of our faith produces endurance"* (Jas.1:3). The word 'testing' describes the ore that passes through the fire to separate the dross from the genuine ore. Trials are like an uncomfortable furnace but it is beneficial because it tells us how genuine our faith is. Moreover, when our faith has been tested, and we pass the test, it produces endurance within us.

When we endure, that brings perfection or growth, the very thing Peter writes about in 2 Pet. 1. When a Christian faces trials, either he can give up in defeat or he can increase his capacity to endure and be steadfast in his commitment to the will of God. Every time we endure, we are strengthened and are able to endure stronger trials in our lives. Thus, trials round our more and more parts of our righteous character so we can be more what God wants us to be.

Many Christians retreat from trials and they become spiritual creampuffs. They never really grow and mature. James tells us there is no easy way to mature. We can only become mature and full-grown when we learn to endure trials when they come. If we will submit to the trials of life, we will not only become perfect and full-grown but...

Endurance Brings Peace

"Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful" (James 5:11).

The book of Job demonstrates the fact that a faithful man will bear any form of trial rather than

forsake God. It shows clearly the struggle of one who, while he cannot understand at the moment the why of suffering, he still endures in his faith toward God.

In Job 1-3, we have Job's DISTRESS. Satan attacked Job's fortune, family and flesh. In Job 4-31, we read of Job's DEFENSE, as he debates with his three friends and answers their false accusations. Job 32-42 presents Job's DELIVERANCE. First, God humbles Job, then He honors Job by giving him twice as much as he had before.

When Satan attacked Job, he was trying to shake his faith in God but he never succeeded. Job would not forsake his faith in God. In the book of Job, Job never really did find out why he suffered but even though Job did not know what you and I know, Job endured. Job did not understand the attack upon his fortune, family and flesh. He did not know why, but he knew Who. He said, *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"* (Job 13:15). James uses Job as an illustration of how Christians should have his tranquility and peace in the midst of trials, troubles and tribulations.

We need to learn that we cannot control most of the circumstances of life. Therefore, what we cannot control, we need to learn to endure. When we endure trials, James 5:11 says we are *"blessed."* That means we are highly favored because we are acceptable with God and that relationship brings peace and tranquility. It is a peace and joy that is untouchable and completely independent of all the changes and circumstances of life.

From Job we learn that God had a loving purpose in allowing His servant to go through trials. He never allows His children to suffer needlessly. Someone says, "But God permitted Satan to take everything Job possessed! Isn't God concerned at all about man's lot on earth?" Yes, God is concerned about His people. He is full of compassion and mercy (Jas.5:11). His heart goes out to His child who is suffering trials but we must go through these trials if we want perfection and peace. And when we endure...

Endurance Brings a Promise

Yes, we receive wonderful benefits in this life when we endure trials but when life is over and we have been approved, *"we will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him"* (Jas. 1:12)

God is not interested in seeing His children falter and fail. He wants us to endure, overcome and win the victory crown. Indeed, the trials and testings of life are hard and difficult but if we could only see what the end result of our lives is going to be, we would be more determined to endure. There can be no victory without endurance. If we do not bear the cross, we cannot wear the crown. If we want to be victorious, we have to endure.

No wonder Peter, after listing the wonderful virtues of 2 Pet. 1:5-7, concluded the section by writing, *"Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you"* (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Peter 1:5-7)

Godliness (2 Pet. 1:6c) by Steve Diaz

As ingredients in the recipe of a master chef, or as accomplished musicians in a fine-tuned symphony, the apostle Peter describes the proper spiritual combination of qualities that makes for a mature, fruit-bearing Christian (2 Pet. 1:5-11). Among these is the quality of godliness (2 Pet. 1:6-7).

What is Godliness?

Godliness comes from the Greek word “eusebia” and is used in the New Testament to express the idea of inner piety or spirituality. Vine defines this word as, “piety, which, characterized by a God-ward attitude, does that which is well pleasing to Him.” Thayer says, “Reverence, respect, in the Bible everywhere piety towards God, godliness.” Moreover, Arndt and Gingrich say it refers to, “the duty which man owes to God piety, godliness, religion.”

Thus, there are two parts to godliness. First, there is the “God-ward attitude” of “reverence and respect.” Second, there also is the “doing of what is pleasing” to God, as the “duty” that we owe to Him. In his commentary on Second Peter, brother Clinton Hamilton recognizes these two aspects of godliness and writes of the Christian who “develops a deep respect and reverence for God so that one begins to exhibit in one’s behavior constant piety toward God” (p. 40).

Godliness as an Attitude

As an attitude, godliness is the quality of the inner person that recognizes from the various evidences that the all-powerful Creator exists, and therefore actively seeks to develop a spiritual relationship with Him. In 1 Tim. 4:8, this inner spirituality is to be preferred over physical “bodily exercises.” In verse 7 the “exercises” a godly person should engage in are those which develop further godliness. In 1 Tim.6:11 godliness is set in contrast to following after the lusts of the flesh and the world. Godliness is a mind set on spiritual matters (Rom.8:5-6).

Godliness, as an attitude, permeates all the Christian virtues that Peter lists, as it is the motivating factor behind our growth as Christians. We do not and cannot grow as Christians without first having the desire to be more spiritual, which is the attitude of godliness. In his booklet on “The Christian Graces,” James Tolle writes, “Indeed, the graces of virtue, knowledge, and self-control, as well as of patience, must be hallowed and inspired by godliness, so that the thought of God is brought into them all, so that they begin and end with God” (p. 52). Godliness is required, then, for those who seek God and for those who seek to be more like the Divine Nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Godliness as Duty

Godliness also has its fruits. There must be the “doing” of what pleases God. We must be careful, though, not to mistake the actions of some as actions of godliness. Morality alone is not godliness, as it may not be motivated by piety and reverence for God. Displays of “spirituality” or “religion” also may not be actions motivated by the desire to please God. Often I hear of

Christians who are envious of some in the denominational world because “they” seem to be more spiritual and religious. Many in the denominational world do claim godliness and spirituality as their own. They “appear” godly (proudly wearing crosses, WWJD bracelets, etc.); they “speak” godly (“Praise the Lord!” “Having a personal relationship with Jesus,” etc.), and their lives seem to exemplify godliness (morality, doing good deeds). However, the scriptures would say they practice a “form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5), and not true godliness!

In the New Testament godliness is a product of following the truth. This is an important point! Godliness is always a result of obeying the truth. Vine comments on several verses on this line of thought and says, “In 1 Tim. 6:3 ‘the doctrine which is according to godliness’ signifies that which is consistent with ‘godliness,’ in contrast to false teachings; in Titus 1:1, ‘the truth which is according to godliness’ is that which is productive of ‘godliness’ in 1 Tim. 3:16, ‘the mystery of godliness’ is ‘godliness’ as embodied in, and communicated through, the truths of the faith concerning Christ...” Thus, one is godly and acts godly upon obedience of the truth, and where there is no obedience of the truth there can be no true godliness or spirituality!

The Fruits of Godliness

Instead of a false “form of godliness,” there are true fruits of godliness that would manifest themselves. Think of a person that you consider godly. What are they like? Usually, we consider one who is godly to be spiritually minded and to live in such a way as to exhibit this spiritual-mindedness in one’s life. What would this consist of? Let me offer some examples.

A godly person seeks God on His terms. Cornelius was called a devout man because he sought to please God (Acts 10:2). The word “devout” is a form of the word for “godliness.” That Cornelius was “devout” can be seen in his response to the preaching of the gospel by Peter (Acts 10:44-48). Whenever one obeys God’s terms of forgiveness they are acting godly.

A godly person worships God “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24). Whenever one follows God’s will on how to worship Him, then one is being godly. Worship is our attempt to give something of ourselves to God. It is the “fruit of our lips” (Heb. 13:15) and the presenting of our bodies as a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). Worship is our inner piety expressing itself to God in praise through our physical bodies.

A godly person shows respect and reverence for God by studying and obeying His Word. Oftentimes we are told that our response to God’s word is directly related to our relationship with God. For example, Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15). To respect God means we must respect His Word! Spiritual growth naturally results, as one becomes a product of the word (1 Tim. 4:13-15).

A godly person is one who acts properly, reacts properly, and leaves no doubt in anyone’s mind that he/she is a child of God. God is seen in this person from the inside out and from the outside in.

No wonder godliness is a part of the spiritual combination that is important for Christians to cultivate. We simply cannot be faithful children of God without godliness.

Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Brotherly Kindness (2 Pet. 1:7a) by Mark Copeland

It is evident from previous articles in this series that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ involves a spiritual construction project. By adding to our faith such graces as virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, and godliness, we are slowly becoming more like our Lord. This is in keeping with God's predetermined plan that we be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Ro 8:29).

Equally, important to spiritual growth is the development of brotherly kindness. Together with love, it adds a focus to our spiritual maturity that is outward (and not just inward and upward), for it affects how we act toward other people.

The Definition of Brotherly Kindness

The Greek word for brotherly kindness is transliterated "philadelphia," a compound involving two words: "phileo" (love) and "adelphos" (brother). It literally means "the love of brothers." As used in the New Testament, "philadelphia" describes the love that Christians cherish for each other as brethren (Thayer). Romans 12:10 reveals that it is through brotherly kindness that we can have "kind affection" toward one another. It is brotherly kindness, therefore, that provides a true sense of family in our association as members of the Lord's body.

The Demand of Brotherly Kindness

Without sincere love for brethren, the apostle John wrote that any claim to love God or even to know God is impossible (1 Jn 4:7-8,20-21). If we truly desire to grow in our knowledge and love of God (including our knowledge of Jesus Christ, the focus of this series), then it is essential that we develop brotherly kindness.

Jesus also made love for brethren an identifying mark by which the world can know we are His disciples (Jn 13:34-35). Right doctrine is certainly important (2 Jn 9), but the world pays little attention to what they may perceive as minor doctrinal differences. What people do notice is love in a world filled with hate, especially when such love is observed among individuals who come from various social, economic, and racial backgrounds. Any attempt to proclaim New Testament Christianity, therefore, will fail to appeal to those in the world unless it is accompanied by a visible demonstration of true brotherly kindness among Christians.

Unity among brethren is also very important as indicated in the prayer of Jesus (Jn 17:20-23). The unity made possible through the cross of Christ is maintained as we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). Crucial to that endeavor is "bearing with one another in love" (Eph 4:2). There will be times when brethren sin against one another, but where brotherly kindness prevails there will also be forbearance and forgiveness. This provides time for repentance and reconciliation necessary to remain united. Unless we develop brotherly kindness, churches will be prone to split at the earliest indication of conflict.

The Development of Brotherly Kindness

As implied in our text, brotherly kindness is a virtue that must be developed. Fortunately, we have assistance from God Himself. When we first obey the gospel, our souls are purified so that sincere and fervent love of the brethren is now possible (1 Peter 1:22-23).

We are then taught how to love one another by God Himself (1 Thess 4:9-10). The Father teaches us the meaning of love by the manner in which He offered His Son as the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn 4:9-10). The Son also demonstrated true love by freely offering His life for us (1 Jn 3:16). The more we reflect upon the love and sacrifice of Jesus, the more we are able to understand the true meaning of brotherly kindness. As Jesus said, "as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34).

I find two other things are helpful to developing brotherly kindness. First, spend time with your brethren. The more I am around people, the more I come to know them personally, the more I share experiences (both good and bad), the easier I find it to "fall in love" with them. It is not much different than with one's own physical family. I had no choice who my three physical brothers would be. However, as we experience life together our love and appreciation for one another deepens. I find it to be the same with my brethren in Christ.

The second thing is to pray fervently for your brethren, especially those with whom you may have a personality clash. It is hard to remain angry or maintain a strong dislike for someone when you spend time praying for them.

As you pray seeking God's love and forgiveness for yourself, it becomes so much easier to love and forgive others.

The Display of Brotherly Kindness

In our relationship as brethren in Christ, brotherly kindness will manifest itself in various ways. A brother who is strong will be considerate of his brother who may be weak (Ro 15:1). Where a brother may have liberty in

Christ, he is willing to limit that freedom if it is beneficial to the spiritual well-being of his weak brother (1 Co 8:13; Gal 5:13). It is also brotherly kindness that will lead one to be cautious about judging a brother or what they say about them (Ja 4:11-12).

Brotherly kindness will also lead Christians to truly care for one another, to warn the unruly, to comfort the faint-hearted, to uphold the weak, to be patient with all (1 Thess 5:14). Yes, it is brotherly kindness that will prompt us to pursue the things that make for peace and the things by which we may edify one another (Ro 14:19).

As we give thought to what it means to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, what it means to grow spiritually, may we appreciate the importance of developing that Christ-like spirit of love for the brethren!

"Let brotherly love continue." (He 13:1)

Faith Results in Spiritual Growth (2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Charity (2 Pet. 1:7b) by Roy Whitworth

I have chosen the Old King James term "charity" because it is the only translation that I know of that makes a clear distinction for the Greek agapè. Even in the KJV it is more often translated "love."

I will be dealing only with "love" which is from agapè. The English terms have been used so loosely, that they are associated with "lust, passion, affection," etc. I want to look at "love" or "charity" as Jesus and the apostles did. The noun is sometimes referred to as "a purely Biblical term," but its verb form was widely used and highly appreciated by both philosophers and the man on the street.

It is defined: "to love, have preference for, to wish well, to regard the welfare of..." "to prize, take pleasure in... to be unwilling to abandon."

When asked "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matt. 22:36-40), Jesus said, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...soul...mind, this is the first and greatest, and the second is like it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* To the true student of the Bible, this statement gives new meaning to the Old Testament scriptures. Not only were they all given because God loved those people (He "wished them well" and "regarded their welfare."), He took "pleasure" in their "pleasure and well-being. (See Rom. 13:8-13)

The Jews must have been shocked to hear Jesus say *"Love your enemies... bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them who spitefully use you and persecute you (misuse and abuse)."* God loves his enemies *"not willing that any should perish, but that all men should come to repentance."* (Matt.5:43-48; 2 Peter 3:9) We are warned of friendship with them; but must desire their well-being. Is love really necessary to salvation?

Let us take a look at 1 Cor. 13:1-3. *"Though I (the Apostle Paul) speak with the tongue of men and of angels, ...and...I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and knowledge, and THOUGH I HAVE ALL (the) FAITH...I am nothing...and though I bestow ALL my goods to feed the poor, and I give all my body to be burned, and have NOT charity, it profits me nothing."* Note the structure of this statement. In English or Greek, it is accumulative: add them up. The speaking + prophecy + understanding (scholarship), + knowledge + FAITH + benevolence + self-sacrifice, without love, they "profit me nothing," though I exercise them to the ultimate degree. No wonder he concludes, *"...faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love."*

If you have not added an abundance of love to your FAITH, it is of no "profit" to you. Of course, your speaking and scholarship, generosity and self-sacrifice may profit others. ALL of us have "profited" from many who will not receive any benefit from their labors and self-sacrifice.

How do we know if we have this kind of love for men and for God?

Of course, we understand that God's "well-being" is established eternally, and nothing we can do or say can affect it. However, our "love" for God moves us to seek to give him all the pleasure we are capable of. *"Whatsoever we ask we receive of Him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in HIS sight."* (1 John 3:22) *"This is the love of God that we keep his commandments."* (1 John 5:3) *"If ye love me ye will keep my commandments."* (John 14:15-24) v.21- *"He that hath my commands and keeps them, he it is that loves me."* v.23- *"If a man loves me he will keep my words."* v.24- *"He that does not love me does not keep my words." It is more than "commandment-keeping;" we must seek to please him by doing his "sayings."* They are expressions of his will.

John teaches us that we cannot love God without loving our brother. (1 John 3:13-20; 4:6-5:3) Nor can we love the brethren if we do not love God and keep his commandments.

Paul teaches us what love is and how it works. 1 Cor. 13:4-7: It suffers long and is kind, does not envy, is not self-promoting or self-centered, doesn't misbehave, is not easily provoked, does not consider doing evil, has no joy in lawlessness, but rejoices in truth; bears all, believes all things. If this is not the kind of person you are, it is the kind you must become. ADD charity. Charity never fails: not in your home, on your job, or as a nation, but it must be genuine and constant. *"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith that works through love."* (Gal. 5:6 NKJV) *"Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother have needs and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"* (1 John 3:17) *"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."* (1 John 5:3) The "righteous" of Matthew 25:31-46 were evidently not seeking any personal benefit from ministering to the needs of others, they "cared" for them, and they "loved" them. They did what they could to assure their "pleasure and well-being." (See v.28) The greatest gift of "love" is salvation for the soul. *"If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed (anathema, maranatha: condemned without hope of redemption)."*

Some Final Thoughts

Peter emphasizes the necessity of adding each of the seven attributes of verses 5-7 to our faith in verses 8-12:

(8) "If these things be in you and abound (abundantly, plentifully) you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful..." (9) "...he that lacks in these things is myopic [lit.] (and cannot see afar off) and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." (10) "...give diligence to make you calling and election sure, for if ye do these things you shall never fall: (11) "For so an entrance shall be ministered to you ABUNDANTLY into the EVERLASTING KINGDOM." (12) "Wherefore I will not neglect to put you always in remembrance of these things."

It is the responsibility of every teacher of the gospel, to see that all "believers" "always" "remember" the urgency of their need to do these things. They ARE NOT optional. (v.12) Any believer who is not supplying his faith abundantly with these things is in danger of losing his soul!

Spiritual Growth Brings Practical Results

Qualities of Service (2 Peter 1:8-11) by James L. (Jim) Yopp

For if these things are yours and abound, they you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:8-11 ASV)

The apostle Peter outlined to his readers seven qualities of service for the Christian (2 Peter 1:5-7). Many people refer to these as the "Christian graces." To this writer, it would seem more appropriate to refer to them as the qualities that should be possessed by all Christians. The very nature of these "graces" will strengthen the character of any disciple. The absence of these qualities, even one of them, will deny one the joy that comes from being fruitful in God's service.

Who would question the value of faith, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brother kindness, and love? How could one profess to be a Christian when he does not seek to grow in all of these qualities? It is not possible for one to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might unless one adds all of the virtues to one's everyday living. The Christian will work to make each quality stronger so that the disciple will be more productive in God's service with each passing day. As Peter said, *"For it these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:8). Either one grows in the Lord or one is fruitless; there is no alternative.

In the absence of any of these traits of a Christian, one is spiritually near-sighted (2 Peter 1:9). In addition, there would be a loss of memory, *"having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins"* (2 Peter 1:9). Those who do not grow in the Lord place themselves in a dangerous condition. Guy N. Woods referred to the condition as "accepted forgetfulness." Such folks just accept their lack of spiritual vision and neglect to remember what God did for them. They need to be encouraged to look up while they look behind to what God did for them and look ahead for what the Lord has prepared for them.

The apostle Peter is encouraging them to *"give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure"* (II Peter 1:10). Effort must be put forth in order to be grounded in the qualities of service Peter outlined. One cannot sit and wait for all of these to drop out of the sky without any effort. The word "diligence" carries the idea of "hasten." Disciples must hasten, never faltering or tiring, to put forth the effort to acquire these values that mark the Christian. The sea of tranquility has drowned many; do not be its next victim!

Peter identifies another reason for possessing the qualities of service: *"For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble"* (2 Peter 1:10). The strength that one gains through the qualities of service will conquer any foe. Temptations will still abound, but the power to overcome Satan's efforts will be in the hearts of those who have added the "graces" that Peter encouraged each to possess. Perhaps the lack of these qualities helps us to understand why so many stumble, failing to live as a Christian.

While the starting point in the life of a disciple is faith and the ending "grace" is love, the other qualities make a bond of righteousness that *"richly"* supplies *"the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:11). Men search for earthly riches; the disciple of Christ accepts the riches of Heaven's reward. What is the quality of your life and what kind of riches (values) are you seeking?