

03. The Epistle of 2Peter—1:5-6

(10/10/18)

2 Peter 1:1-5a (NKJV)

¹ Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. ⁵ **But also for this very reason, giving all diligence...**

In the first four verses, Peter talks about the grace and divine power of God that saved us—in other words—imparted spiritual life to us thru the Holy Spirit.

He then proceeds to tell us that not only has God given us spiritual life thru the new birth—He further has ‘deposited’ into us His divine nature (we were born of God and are thus children of God).

When we were born into this world physically we received our earthly father Adam’s fallen nature—when we were born spiritually we received our Heavenly Father’s nature.

And as we studied last time, by virtue of the new birth and the Holy Spirit living inside of us supplying us with His divine power—we have all that is necessary to live a life of godliness.

You see, once we are born of God and have become His sons and daughters, that is not the end—it is only the beginning! (just like when a physical baby is born, it’s not the end but only the beginning).

From that point on *we* are commanded to *grow* in the Christian life—and it doesn’t happen automatically.

It becomes *our* responsibility to “give all diligence” (v.5) to our walk with the Lord.

The goal of our Christian life is to make us more and more into the image of Christ (2Cor.3:18).

But for that to happen, we must desire it, surrender to it and be determined, by God’s grace, to live it.

As someone has said, “*salvation is the miracle of a moment—sanctification is the work of a lifetime*”.

This is only possible thru a joint ‘partnership’ and mutual cooperation between us and God’s Spirit consisting of—my will (surrender) and His power.

It’s the same basic admonition that Paul exhorted the Philippians with when he said—

Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. (see the partnership between us and God)

Even after conversion, we still maintain our free-will and can exercise it to live carnally (self-willed life) or obediently to the will of God for our lives.

God does not make us holy against our will or without our involvement—there must be desire, determination, and discipline on our part if we’re going to grow in our walk with Jesus.

Of course, it all starts with saving faith which brings the new birth—but then Peter says we need to add seven ‘characteristics’ or ‘virtues’ to our initial or ‘saving’ faith if we’re going to be all that God wants us to be.

2 Peter 1:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, **add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.**

We must be careful not to think of these characteristics as ‘seven rungs on a ladder’ that allow us to ‘climb’ higher in our relationship with Jesus, or ‘seven stages of development’ that we pass thru on our way to Christ-likeness.

The word translated “**add**” doesn’t mean to add ‘one at a time’ or ‘one on top of another and then another and another’—the Greek word really means “*to supply generously.*”

In other words, we are not to limit the growth of these virtues in our lives but we are to continue drawing close to Jesus every day because as we do—these graces will grow and develop simultaneously and naturally as our walk with Jesus grows and matures.

In that regard, it’s very much like the fruit of the Spirit (not ‘fruits’ of the Spirit) that Paul talked about in Galatians 5:22-23 the—*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*—all grow together simultaneously in our lives as a single ‘fruit’ as we grow in Christ (not one at a time).

However, for any fruit or quality of godliness to grow in a Christian’s life—we must be diligent to pursue godliness (as Daniel did in Babylon).

And so with that in mind, Peter continues, “**add** [imperative in the Greek—i.e. ‘a command’] **to your faith virtue**” (v.5)

The Greek word translated ‘**virtue**’ means something that *pleases* God (in 1Peter 2:9 the word is translated ‘*praises*’).

The word basically means ‘*excellence*’ as in ‘*moral excellence*’ or ‘*goodness of action*’.

When God saved us, His goal was to make us *godly* ('like God' or the 'quality of God-likeness') and so when we live lives of moral excellence we are fulfilling our purpose as His children and that pleases Him—i.e. “praises” Him.

We could paraphrase what Peter is exhorting this way—*“To the faith that saved you add a life that praises God.”*

Pastor, author and commentator Warren Wiersbe put it well—

*“The first quality of character Peter listed was **virtue**. We met this word in 2 Peter 1:3, and it basically means “excellence.” To the Greek philosophers, it meant “the fulfillment of a thing.” When anything in nature fulfills its purpose, that is “virtue—moral excellence”...The land that produces crops is “excellent” because it is fulfilling its purpose. The tool that works correctly is “excellent” because it is doing what a tool is supposed to do.*

A Christian is supposed to glorify God because he has God’s nature within; so, when he does this, he shows “excellence” because he is fulfilling his purpose in life. True virtue in the Christian life is not “polishing” human qualities, no matter how fine they may be, but producing divine qualities that make the person more like Jesus Christ.”

We are living at a time when evil in our culture is so profound that even Christians are succumbing to the darkness and not living lives of moral excellence.

Of course, when you put ‘grey’ next to ‘black’ morally speaking—the grey looks almost ‘white’ (righteous by comparison).

The old Baptist preacher Vance Havner said—

“We are living in the dark. We were born into it and it was born in us. We were children of darkness at one time but when we received the gospel we became children of light. At that point the darkness inside us was replaced with light but we found ourselves still living in the moral and spiritual darkness of this world which is all around us.

We are living at the close of an age that is dominated by the prince and powers of darkness—a world where men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. But the night is far spent, the day of Christ's return is at hand—and yet it's always blackest before the dawn. The darkness has never been more pervasive and persuasive in my lifetime than it is today in our nation. Not only do we live in the dark as Christians—we've gotten used to the dark!

We have all had the experience of walking into a very dark room where all we could see was blackness—but after a few seconds our eyes adjusted, and we got used to the dark. This has happened to many Christians spiritually and morally. We are all experiencing a slow, subtle and sinister brainwashing process that is gradually desensitizing us to the darkness. Little by little sin is being made to look less and less sinful until the light that is in us is darkness, and as Jesus

said, "If the light that is in you is darkness—how great is that darkness." The result is we no longer hate evil. We don't abhor it—we've gotten used to the dark."

This is NOT the kind of life that honors God, pleases God or praises God—add to your faith **virtue!**

“to virtue knowledge” (v.5)

The word Peter used here for ‘**knowledge**’ is an *intellectual* knowledge that comes thru the study of something so as to become ‘proficient’ in that subject or field of study.

And here Peter is telling us that we must be students of God’s Word if we’re going to be able, thru the power of the Holy Spirit, to live the lives God wants us to live so that we can become all He wants us to be. (Psalm 119:9, 11)

In fact, this Greek word means “*full knowledge*” (a mature knowledge) or “*knowledge that is growing.*”

This was so important to Peter that he devotes the rest of chapter one to it and then closes his epistle with the admonition—

2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

Paul admonished Christians in much the same way when he admonished us—

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Be diligent [KJV—“Study”] to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

There is nothing worse than a Christian who has not studied God’s Word and consequently doesn’t know hardly anything with regard to their faith—

Hebrews 5:12-14 (NLT2)

¹² You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. ¹³ For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. ¹⁴ Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

Much of the blame for this biblical ignorance lies at the door of the church itself, as many pastors no longer teach God's Word in its entirety with power and conviction.

Only God's Word has the power to transform a life.

But sadly, far too many churches have rejected that idea as foolish, archaic and naïve choosing rather to make the focus of their church's things like—mysticism (contemplative spirituality), materialism (word of faith), environmentalism, and social justice (Christianized socialism) just to name a few of the themes that dominate many pulpits in our country today.

That's why more and more Christians all over the country, and the world, are saying, "*Our church isn't what it used to be.*"

The host of the Christian radio show *Cross Talk* read some letters she had received on this subject—

"Our church is changing, something's happening, our church is moving away from a biblical Christ centered approach to ministry. The meaty sermons have disappeared and we're getting entertainment. Our small group is memorizing large portions of the Purpose Driven Life instead of memorizing Scripture. Something's changing in our church, we can't put our finger on it but it seems that our voices are being ignored. When we try to speak out in our small group people shout us down. We are viewed as Bible-thumpers in our own church."

These things are the fulfillment of what Paul said would characterized the last days church—

2 Timothy 4:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ...² Preach the word! Be ready in

season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

“to knowledge self-control” (v.6)

In the KJV the word is translated ‘*temperance*’.

In the early days of our nation’s history there were many “Temperance Societies”—groups that promoted sobriety—i.e. ‘self-control’ with regard to drinking alcohol (actually members pledged abstinence from drinking alcohol altogether).

The word translated ‘**self-control**’ is a word that literally means “*holding oneself in*”—as in *restraining* oneself.

One author said—

“[The word] was used of athletes who sought self-discipline and self-restraint, even beating their bodies into submission (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). They would also abstain from rich foods, wine, and sexual activity in order to focus all their strength and attention on their training regimen.”

Paul in his letters often compared the Christian to an athlete who must exercise and discipline himself if he ever hopes to win the prize—

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NLT2)

²⁴ Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! ²⁵ All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. ²⁶ So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. ²⁷ I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

Philippians 3:14-16 (NLT2)

¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. ¹⁵ Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. ¹⁶ But we must hold on to the

progress we have already made.

1 Timothy 4:8 (NLT2)

⁸ “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”

The same word translated ‘**self-control**’ in 2Peter 1:6 is the word Paul used in Galatians 5:23 when he listed ‘self-control’ as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

I believe that the kind of self-control that Peter has in mind here can only come thru the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

This self-control is a fruit of our relationship with Jesus, who is the ‘Vine’ and we are the ‘branches’ (John 15).

And again, I believe that God’s grace to be all that He wants us to be, including bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, comes as we abide in Jesus.

When we do, then the words of Paul in Phil. 2:13 will become a reality in our lives—

Philippians 2:13 (NLT2)

¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Remember, the power to be all God wants us to be can only come from Him—not hard work and self-effort on our part no matter how determined or sincere we might be.