

Cultivating Christian Character
Living in the Light of Our Mission
2 Peter 1:5-7 (Series)
Sermon 1

Text: 2 Peter 1:1-4

*Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, 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 seeing that His divine power has granted
to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of
Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted
to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become
partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world
by lust.*

Introduction:

Few individuals have had the sort of global impact and influence as that Winston Churchill enjoyed in the 20th Century of the history of our race.

He was described as the Lion who roared when the British Empire needed him most! Historians across the board have noted that he was perhaps the “Greatest Statesman of the 20th Century.”

And many of his biographers have noted that it was not so much what he said or did **but rather who he was** that gave him this impact!

He was an effective leader and statesman because of his unusual ability to inspire people regardless of seemingly ominous circumstances. And most of his biographers observe that ***his ability to inspire an entire nation to rise up to victory was sourced in his character – his indomitable and perpetual enthusiasm, determination, and optimism.***

Character – the qualities and traits that make up what a person really is when no one is looking and/or regardless of the consequences.

Good Character is indispensable component to both healthy relationships and the exercise of influence on others.

Nor is this a value that was forged in the furnace of Western ideology and set in vogue in the 20th century.

Good character and its cultivation is an important consequence of the Christian Gospel – and certainly it was of great importance to the community of Christ in the 1st Century. This is especially true for Peter who wrote 2 letters to people who were called to live out their faith in very difficult and hostile environments.

In fact, Peter is going to argue that believers living in the midst of a culture hostile to the Gospel needed above all else to cultivate the sort of character that would display itself in consistent behavior that would cause hostile observers to glorify God in the day of His visitation (1 Peter 2:12)

1 Peter 2:12: *Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

So this evening I want to begin a series of messages from Peter's 2nd letter to these early believers **designed to spur us on (both as a church and as individual believers) to cultivate the sort of consistent Christian character that will help us to represent the Lord Jesus Christ accurately and attractively to the World in which we live.**

5 important and initial observations about the cultivation of Christian Character from Peter's perspective:

1. Grounded in the Nature and Character of God (1 Peter 1:14-15)

1 Peter 1:14-15: *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, " You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

2. Possible because we were made in the image of God and designed to bear His glory (1 Peter 1:14a; 2 Peter 1:4)

1 Peter 1:14a: *As obedient children,*

2 Peter 1:4: *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature,*

3. Enabled and Empowered by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:3)

2 Peter 1:3: *seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*

4. Shaped and Formed by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:22-23, 2:1-2;)

1 Peter 1:22-23: *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

1 Peter 2:1-2: *Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,*

5. Necessary in light of God's Calling and Purpose for our Lives corporately and individually (1 Peter 2:9-12)

1 Peter 2:9-12: *But you are A chosen race, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, A people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were not A people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Mission of the Church and therefore of every believer is found in this text -- **so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

This is what is **at the root of formulating the sort of Christian character** that will represent Jesus Christ accurately and attractively to a world of people bound up in darkness and enslaved to sin who desperately need to see the light and come to know the truth about Jesus – **the proclamation of the multiplied excellencies of the One Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!**

Peter's statement about proclaiming the excellences of God is stated another way by Paul – Glorify God! (1 Cor 10:31)

Causing other people to come to right opinions about God (Who He is and What He is like) so that they might give to Him His proper place in their lives!

And though we are to defend His truth and proclaim it with our lips – that defense and proclamation will fall on deaf ears unless it is accompanied by a life that displays the transforming power of that truth to take a person out of moral and spiritual darkness and bring him into the light!

KEY QUESTION: How do we become a church that is causing our community to come to right opinions about God? How do we become individual believers who are being transformed by the Gospel in such a way that is drawing others to Christ through such a powerful gospel?

PETER's ANSWER: Cultivate Consistent Christian Character!

And He points out the way forward in the opening paragraph of His second letter (2 Peter 1:1-4).

These verses help us to see that consistent Christian character is ***built on the Foundation of Genuine Faith; Enabled by the power of Gracious Promises; and Designed for a Glorious Purpose!***

Conclusion:

- The mission of the Church – corporately and individually is to proclaim the glorious excellences of the One Who graciously saved us!
- In other words – ***our mission and/or job description as a church is to glorify God by causing other people to come to right opinions about Who He is and What He is like so that they will give to Him His proper place in their lives.***
- We are **to reflect Christ accurately and attractively** to a world that desperately needs to come to a true knowledge of Him.
- And in order to do so effectively – we must strive to cultivate the kind of Christian character that Peter describes here.

And I would suggest that any serious attempt to cultivate this sort of Christian character and display it consistently -- demands serious and sober consideration of the following things:

1. **Are we truly cultivating a Christ-like life and spirit in our church and in our lives?**
 - Do others who experience our church or touch our lives individually experience what Christ is like or do they just experience us?
2. **Are we doing so in our strength and wisdom or is this something that God's Spirit is growing in us?**
 - Fruits of the Spirit should be naturally present in our life – they don't come because we work harder at them.
 - So if they are not present – it ought to be cause for concern as to what is prohibiting their natural growth in our lives.
3. **Are we marked by the internal graces that marked Christ?**
 - Beatitudes
4. **Are we striving to display the virtues that Christ displayed or have we come up with our own list?**
 - Are we committed to displaying conduct that is truly blameless in the sight of the Gentiles as opposed to conduct that is merely pious and self-righteous in their eyes.

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- The goal Peter put before his readers was not merely to appear more righteous than the unbelievers around them – but to actually act blamelessly and righteously toward them and with them.
- What value is it when we rigidly refuse to engage in things they don't believe to be wrong while at the same time we engage in actions and behaviors that wrong them!

5. Are we actively and biblically engaging the world around us as we live out our Faith and fulfill our calling – or have we retreated into a Christian Fort mentality?

- Peter is talking to a group of people who have been called by God to represent Him accurately and attractively in a hostile environment. And they were to do so by actively engaging the World around them.
- They were to be an army – marching forward in enemy territory.
- Not primarily a school to gather more information
- Not a hospital to fix people
- Not a museum to preserve the past
- Not a Fort to protect the purity
- AN ARMY! On the move in enemy territory!

6. Are we driven by the things that concern Christ or are we driven more by the things that concern us?

- Our spiritual comfort
- Our spiritual tradition
- Our own ideas about what things should look like?
- As a pastor – there were times when people came to express their concerns about a song we did; a version that was used; a perception they had about something that was different or a danger they felt was creeping into the church.
- No one came to express concern that we were not winning people to Christ in our community.
- Very happy to see people saved in New York or Yap – but no real concern that almost no one was being reached in our own town.
- If someone's hair in the choir got a big shaggy – we were certain to hear about it.
- If a visitor wore attire that was unacceptable – we were sure to hear about it.
- If the teens did an activity on Halloween were sure to hear about it.
- In other words – if people perceived that we were departing from any of the practices that had been the traditional ones of our church for 30 years – we were sure to hear about it.
- But rarely if ever did we hear concerns that our church was not reaching out and winning people in our community to Christ.

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- We rarely heard concerns that our church was not racially diverse enough – we were content with a token smattering of people who were different than us.
- Rarely if ever did we hear concerns about the fact that we had a youth group that was shipshape and in order – but in the course of 20 years not one young person from that group had gone into any form of full-time ministry.
- Rarely did we hear concerns that so and so stopped coming because they did not feel welcome in our church or that our church was not warm and friendly. In fact, if anyone dared to insinuate that we were not friendly – they would be attacked and duly rebuked!
- And one day – we came to 2 Peter as a church and these texts forced us to take a long and uncomfortable look at ourselves corporately – and we realized that while we were doing all sorts of things that we had always done – we were not doing very well at representing Jesus Christ accurately and attractively in our community.
- Are we willing to allow Peter to speak to us directly and are we willing to respond submissively as opposed to defensively?

Cultivating Christian Character
Building on a Firm Foundation –
The Foundation of Christian Character!
2 Peter 1:5-7 (Series)
Sermons 2

Text: 2 Peter 1:1-4

*Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, 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 seeing that His divine power has granted
to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of
Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted
to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become
partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world
by lust.*

Introduction:

The stability of any building is only as good as the strength of the foundation upon which it is built.

Perhaps the most famous illustration of this is the freestanding bell tower of the Cathedral of the Italian city of Pisa. You know the bell tower as the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa – the one from which Galileo dropped to canon balls to prove that an objects mass did not affect the speed of its descent.

The tower was constructed in three stages over a period of 200 years. Work began on the tower in August of 1173 and the 7 story tower was finally completed in 1372.

Five years into the building of the tower, during the construction of the second story (of seven), workers noticed that one side of the tower was beginning to sink. Examination revealed that the reason for the tilt was the tower had been build on a foundation of only 3 meters and that the foundation had been further weakened because it had been set in unstable subsoil.

By the time the tower was completed – the tilt was severe. Engineers designed upper floors with one side taller than the other to compensate for the tilt. Building was suspended for lengthy periods of time to allow the soil to settle and stabilize.

In 1964 the tower was so unstable it was temporarily closed to the public and a multinational task force of engineers and mathematicians were called in to discuss ways of stabilizing the ancient landmark. 800 tons of lead counterweights were added to the base. The famous bells were removed from the tower. Cables were cinched around the 3rd level and anchored into the

ground. And eventually, 127 cubic yards of soil were removed from under the raised end to reduce the tilt and stabilize the tower.

Foundations matter!

Last time we took a look at what Peter had to say about the importance of cultivating Christian character in order to fulfill the mission God has given us individually and corporately – to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out darkness into His marvelous light!

Our mission is to represent Jesus Christ accurately and attractively.

This week we want to examine the deep and rich foundation that Peter set forth upon which he grounds the call to the formation of Christian character in our lives.

KEY QUESTION: How do we become a church that is causing our community to come to right opinions about God? How do we become individual believers who are being transformed by the Gospel in such a way that is drawing others to Christ through such a powerful gospel?

PETER'S ANSWER: Cultivate Consistent Christian Character!

And He points out the way forward in the opening paragraph of His second letter (2 Peter 1:1-4). These verses help us to see that consistent Christian character is built on the Foundation of Genuine Faith; Enabled by the power of Gracious Promises; and Designed for a Glorious Purpose!

I. Christian Character is built on the foundation of Genuine Faith (2 Peter 1:1-2)

Peter begins with an important observation – Consistent Christian character is a result of something God has already done for Believers – He has given them a glorious Salvation!

This is important because often, even in churches like ours, we can tend to fall into a way of thinking that assumes our “standing with God” is in some way procured by our own self effort.

So Peter points out that our cultivation of Christian Character is in response to something marvelous that God has first done for us!

A. *He granted (appointed) to us a salvation (1:1)*

- Peter is writing to a group of people who have received something – term has reference to something appointed by lot
- These people had been the recipients of God's graciousness – whatever it was they received did not come to them because of anything they merited or had done – but rather because of God's gracious and sovereign intervention.

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- And what they had received was “Faith” – the idea here is not merely the information or content of the gospel or even the ability to believe in that content – but rather the entire process of salvation.
- They had received a “salvation or deliverance” from God!

B. Our Salvation is equal in value and honor to that of the Apostles (1:2)

- These people had received a salvation that was identical in kind and equal in value/honor as the salvation Peter and the Apostle’s themselves had received!
- They had obtained something from God and what they had obtained was a salvation that was as valuable, precious, and honorable as that of the Apostles.

C. This Salvation is marked by God's own righteousness obtained for us through Christ Himself (1:1)

by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

- The salvation we have received consists of the provision of a righteousness that is on the one hand alien to us and on the other hand native to God.
- And we have obtained it through God Himself – Christ here is being referenced as both God and Savior.
- In other words – the righteousness that belonged to God alone was graciously and freely given to us – and it was given to us on the basis of what God our Savior – Jesus Christ – did for us!

D. It is relational in nature and ethical in scope (1:2)

- This salvation changed everything for us – we were once God’s enemies who were actively engaged in hostility toward Him. Now our relationship has totally changed – it is now marked by grace and peace!
- It is marked ethically by a knowledge of God – as opposed to the immorality that indelibly marked us when we were ignorant of God!
- Knowledge here is “epignosis” – More than:
 1. Intellectual knowledge – knowing the right things about God
 2. Relational knowledge – knowing and affirming God

BUT It has an:

 3. Ethical and moral component – knowledge that leads to a certain way of living.

What we know about God should lead us into a relationship with God that should manifest itself in a life that is like God’s!

So - Consistent Christian Character that represents Jesus Christ accurately and attractively begins on the foundation of a Genuine Faith that we have received from God! But Peter has something else to say about cultivating this sort of Christian Character:

II. Christian Character is built by the power of Gracious Promises (2 Peter 1:3-4)

1:3-4: *seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

A. An Amazing Provision – Provision of Divine Power

seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence

- Peter reminds us that God has given us a divine enablement
- This divine enablement has provided everything that pertains to living out our salvation in a way that pleases God (life and godliness is a hendiadys).
- This divine enablement is accessed through a growing intimate knowledge of Christ who called us.
- Who is He and What is He like and how should that shape who I am and what I am like?

B. An Astonishing Perspective – Participation in the Divine Nature

so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- The “faith/salvation” we received has granted us more than just a pardon from the guilt and penalty of our sins – it has done more than clean us up on the outside – it has radically changed us on the inside.
- This salvation has in fact made us partakers of the parts of God’s nature that can be shared with His creatures (communicable attributes – ***particularly His moral excellence***).
- While we were in sin we were hopeless broken – depraved! The image of God was marred and radically distorted to the point that we instinctively thought and acted like our Father the Devil!
- And in one gracious act of inexpressible kindness and mercy – God, in a marvelous display of His creation power – restored the image of Himself in us and we are now partakers of what our depravity once denied to us! We who were morally depraved are now in the process

of participating in the moral excellencies of the One who made us righteous and is even now making us righteous in conforming us to the image of His Son!

And both of these glorious realties are inextricably bound up in precious and magnificent promises that God has graciously granted to us. (**These Promises are declared to us by God's words and preserved for us in God's Word**)

But there is one final truth Peter places before those who are called to engage in the struggle to cultivate Christian Character:

III. Christian Character is built for a Glorious Purpose (1:3b)
through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

- Jesus – the One who has called us and granted to us such a marvelous salvation/Faith – is marked by two important realities: Glory and Virtue (excellence).
 - Glory - God's splendor and majesty – honor and praiseworthy
 - Virtue – Moral Excellence
- In other words – these two terms are used to sum up the totality of Jesus' life and character – Jesus' life was full of glory in that it reflected God's splendor and majesty – it was therefore honorable and praiseworthy – and it was morally excellent in every respect. **It was totally like God and it was pleasing to God!**
- And we have been called to live that sort of a life – a life that is like God's and that is pleasing to God!
- And there is an important reason for doing so – 1 Peter 2:9-12
But you are A chosen race, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, A people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were not A people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.
- This is what is **at the root of formulating the sort of Christian character** that will represent Jesus Christ accurately and attractively to a world of people bound up in darkness and enslaved to sin who desperately need to see the light and come to know the truth about Jesus – **the proclamation**

of the multiplied excellences of the One Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

- They desperately need to come in contact with light and truth! And that light needs to portray a picture of Jesus that is both accurate and attractive.
- and that portrait is to be painted by believers who have themselves come to see the indescribable beauty and immeasurable value of Jesus and whose lives have been radically transformed by the immense power of the Gospel!

Conclusion:

Peter reminds us that any successful attempt to cultivate the sort of Christian character that will represent Jesus Christ accurately and attractively must be grounded on a genuine faith, must be enabled by God's gracious promises, and it must be oriented to God's glorious purposes.

With that in mind – 3 penetrating questions:

1. Is your Faith Genuine? Is it more than an intellectual reality? Is your relationship to Christ healthy and growing?
2. How and in what ways is your character being shaped by and conformed to the Word of God?
3. Who can you point to who has come to see the beauty of Christ and the transforming power of the gospel in their own life because they saw an accurate and attractive portrayal of Christ in your life?

Cultivating Christian Character
Growing in Grace - Building Blocks to Spiritual Growth
2 Peter 1:5-11 (Series)
Sermon 3

Texts:

2 Peter 1:5-11 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 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; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Introduction:

- Third sermon in our series on ***Constructing Christian Character – Forming up a Faith that Matters/Impacts.***
- In our first message together we spent time looking at what Peter had to say to first century believers who had ***received the same faith we have received,*** were living under ***similar circumstances*** and facing ***similar pressures*** as the ones we face, and who had been ***given a mission identical*** to the one that has been given to us.
- Peter, facing the prospect of his approaching departure via martyrdom was ***burdened to exhort his readers to Live in Light of the Mission God had given them*** – God had called them to represent Jesus Christ accurately and attractively to a world that desperately needed to know and embrace the Gospel.
- ***And in 1 Peter 2:9 Peter reminded his readers of what God had graciously and gloriously done for them!***
1 Peter 2:9 But you are A chosen race, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, A people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

God had:

1. Chosen them to be His people – *a chosen race*
2. Established them as a Royal Priesthood – *a royal priesthood*

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3. Appointed them as His Unique and Distinct Nation – *a holy nation, a people (nation) for God's own possession*
 4. Given them a Special Mission – *to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*
- Then, in our second message together on this passage, we noted that ***fulfilling this mission demands the cultivation of a strong and vibrant faith that will not be shaken by the storms of trial, temptation, or opposition.*** And we noted that the strong faith exhibited by these early Christians had deep roots – it rested on a strong and deep foundation (verses 1-4).
 - ***That brings us to verse 5 in the text – and it also brings us to the next question we should be asking.***
 - Question 1: What is our life mission? Answer: To represent the Lord Jesus Christ accurately and attractively by cultivating a vibrant and unshakeable Faith. (1 Peter 2.9)
 - Question 2: What will be required to build that sort of unshakeable, unmovable faith? Answer: Deep Roots! Building it on the right Foundation (2 Peter 1:1-4).
 - Question 3: What will building this sort of faith require of us? Answer: A commitment to Growing in the Grace and Knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*
Note: We noted that grace was more than unmerited favor – it was Divine enablement.

Note: We noted that knowledge was more than just accurate information about God – but that it was relational in nature and ethical in orientation. We are intimately acquainted with Christ and are being changed in character and conduct as a result.
- So . . . how do we begin the process of growing in this sort of divine enablement and this sort of intimate knowledge?

I. Growing in Grace Begins with an Important Reminder (1:5)
Now for this very reason also

Before Peter launches his readers on the journey to a powerful faith – he stands with them on the deck and points them back to the powerful realities that are both the foundation and the reason for the journey they are embarking on.

A. *We are to build a living faith in light of what God has done for us –*

- graciously and freely imparted to us participation in a living, authentic faith.

B. *We are to build a living faith in light of what God is doing for us now –*

- allowing us to share in His own divine nature by delivering us from the corruption/defilement that is in the world through sin-dominated desires.

C. *What God intends to do through us –*

- the fulfillment of His great and precious promises – and for Peter, those promises relate to His 2nd Coming!
- He rescued us from sin, He is delivering us from sin, and He will one day come to remove us from sin!
- And it is these great realities that Peter points to as we cast off the mooring lines and prepare to set sail!

II. Growing in Grace Demands Intentional Pursuit (1:5)

applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence

A. *Personally and Corporately . . . Your*

- This is not just private behavior – though it must certainly include that concept.
- This is something that Peter is challenging the body to cultivate – the church corporately is to make sure this is happening.

B. *Constantly and Intentionally . . . applying all diligence*

- The terminology here stresses both the importance as well as the strenuous effort that will be required.

C. *Abundantly and Aggressively . . . supply to your faith*

- The term here is an unusual one – it has reference to the rich, abundant, and lavish provision that a patron would give/supply to a group or an individual whose cause or mission he supported.

In other words, growing in Grace is:

- Of utmost importance to a congregation/believer
- Worthy of our most strenuous efforts
- Will require intentional pursuit and lavish supply

III. Growing in Grace Develops Progressively (1:6-7)

in (to) your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

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- If the goal is to proclaim and display the excellencies of the One Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light – then we must cultivate a life that looks like His Son!
- So . . . How do we cultivate Christlikeness?
- Peter answers by pointing us to 7 specific virtues (spiritual qualities) that every believer personally and each congregation corporately should strive to cultivate in lavish quantities.
- We have been called to represent Jesus Christ accurately and attractively to the surrounding culture – this means that we are going to have to be growing in grace so that we are more and more like Christ and less and less like the fallen culture around us.
- And in order to accomplish this – Peter points us to a pathway – he charts a course that leads to Christlikeness – a Faith that will make a difference.

A. *Christ-like Character Involves Two Inner Virtues*

1. Virtue – Moral Excellence
2. Knowledge – Spiritual Discernment

B. *Christ-like Character Demands Two External Disciplines*

3. Temperance – Self-control (saying no to our flesh)
4. Patience – Endurance (Standing firm under extended pressure – saying no for a long time!)

C. *Christ-like Character is Oriented to the Right Audience*

5. Godliness – living for God's approval alone

D. *Christ-like Character is Expressed in Two Directions*

6. Brotherly Kindness – expressing Christ's love to those in the household of Faith.
7. Love – expressing God's love toward those who are outside the household of faith.

IV. Growing in Grace Results in Spiritual Benefit (8-11)

A. *Spiritual Effectiveness (v 8)*

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. *Moral Stability (vv 9-10)*

For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 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;

C. Spiritual Reward (v. 11)

for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Conclusion:

So . . . what does this mean for me and you personally and for us corporately?

1. It means we must take a long, hard, honest look at where we are on our journey toward Christlikeness.

- Are we progressing spiritually or are we sitting at a standstill?
- Are we passionate about our relationship with Christ?

2. It means we must re-evaluate the goals and priorities of our lives.

- Are we really living for the right mission in life.
- Are we devoting our energies and directing our resources to that mission – or is it just a small part of our life?

3. It means we must re-evaluate the effectiveness of our service for Christ.

- Are we truly displaying the right virtues in our lives personally and congregationally?
- Are we credible witnesses (personally and congregationally) to the proclamation God has called us to announce – the incredible worthiness and value of the One who called us out of darkness.

We say that Jesus is infinitely more valuable than any earthly power, pleasure, or treasure – do we live in ways that give credibility to that claim? AND . . . who have we convinced?

Cultivating Christian Character

The Value of Virtue

Manifesting Moral Excellence: Being Moral in an Immoral Culture

2 Peter 1:5-11 (Series)

Sermon 4

Text

2 Peter 1:5-11 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 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; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Introduction:

- What would you do if you knew you were going to embark on a 60 year journey that would involve strenuous sailing through treacherous, challenging waters?
- What preparations would you make? How seriously would you prepare for the journey if you knew that the lives of those you loved would be impacted eternally by how well you navigated the journey?
- How would you handle the provision of an accurate chart prepared by a master cartographer who had traveled the journey Himself and had navigated it successfully?
- Peter has gathered us together on the deck of the ship and has taken the time to prepare us for a journey that will be strenuous and lengthy – and that is of monumental importance to our own lives and to the lives of others.
- He has gathered us together on the deck of the ship and before casting off on the journey – he takes the time to remind the travelers
 1. Of the primary reason for the voyage -- a mission they have been given to accomplish. (1 Peter 2:8-9)
 2. Of the incredible provisions that have been lavishly appropriated for them by the One Who has commissioned the voyage. (2 Peter 1:1-4)
 3. Of the nature and demands that will be expected of those who wish to make the journey profitably (everyone on the ship will get to the destination – but some will arrive in better shape than others having accomplished the mission). (2 Peter 1:5-7)

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4. Of the anticipated benefits and attending dangers that will be encountered on the journey (1:8-11)
- Which brings us to the journey itself – As the mooring lines are cast off and the ship begins to depart– Peter gives the crew their first instruction – one that will set the tone for the rest of the journey.
 - And here it is: As you start out on this journey for the Lord – as you sail the ship of your life through the sea of the fallen culture surrounding you – you will need to give attention to cultivating virtue in your life!
 - So this evening we want to take the time to make sure we understand exactly what Peter has in mind for us in relationship to this aspect of the journey – the cultivation of virtue in our lives and why it is so valuable and essential – ***The Value of Christian Virtue.***
- I. Virtue Demanded** – what is the most important thing we are to give primary focus and attention to as we start the journey?
- Most of us are familiar with the 7 deadly sins or vices common to mankind.
 - Lust – 35% of American's admit to this being the sin they most commit of the list.
 - Anger/Temper – 18%
 - Pride – 12%
 - Sloth/Laziness – 10%
 - Envy – 10%
 - Gluttony – 9%
 - Greed – 9%
 - That list was originally developed in about 380 AD by a monastic named Pontius the Solitaire.
 - That list was translated from Greek to Latin by one of his disciples – a monk named John Cassian.
 - It was formalized almost 200 years later by Pope Gregory 1 in 590 AD
 - It was popularized by Geoffry Chaucer in 1350 when he wrote the Canterbury Tales.
 - Over the years – another list of qualities was compiled over against and in contrast to these universal vices – a list of seven virtues.
 - Self-Control contrasted Lust
 - Kindness contrasted Anger
 - Humility contrasted Pride
 - Zeal/Diligence contrasted Sloth
 - Love contrasted Envy
 - Temperance contrasted Gluttony
 - Generosity contrasted Greed

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However helpful these lists might be – they really do not supersede or replace the inspired lists we have in Scripture – one of which is given in our passage.

7 qualities that every believer is to intentionally cultivate in lavish quantities in their life.

Several important observations/conclusions we need make as we think about this list and the NT

1. This is an inspired list – so it is accurate and reliable
2. This is not an exclusive list – there are other places in the NT that fill out additional qualities (Gal 5:22-23 – fruits of the Spirit, Romans 5:3-5/James 1:3-4; 1 Cor 13 qualities of love, etc). But for Peter's purposes, this is the list he wants believers to focus on when they are trying to cultivate the sort of life that will proclaim the excellencies of the One Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.
3. This list is not optional – it is imperative and foundational. We won't be able to accomplish the mission we have been given apart from these things.
4. This list is progressive – these qualities are not separate and unrelated concepts – each one is set in relationship to the previous one.

AND that makes the first quality on this list the predominant one.

In other words – Peter is implying that at the heart of fulfilling the Christian mission lies the cultivation of Virtue in the life of a Christian – everything else in the list rises up out of this, enables this in our lives, and displays it consistently to God, our brothers, and the pagan world around us.

So – central to proclaiming the excellencies of the One Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light is the intentional cultivation and consistent manifestation of Christian virtue.

II. Virtue Defined – what exactly is virtue?

So if Peter is right and the cultivation of Christian Virtue is so central to our mission – what exactly does Peter mean for us to understand when he uses the term “virtue?”

- In Peter's day the term for virtue (*arête*) would be very familiar to his readers.

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- Though its use in the NT documents is rare (some 4x in the NT 3 of which are in Peter) – it was a common term used by the philosophers and writers of the day.
- It meant to lift up or to please and it came to be used for the idea of praiseworthy. And something or someone that was worthy of praise was that way because they were “good” at the thing they were being praised for. (Hence – “goodness”)
- It was most commonly used by Greek writers in the intellectual sense to speak of a particular aspect of something as opposed to the moral wholeness or entire life of the person.
- For example – a soldier who acted with valor was “virtuous” even though perhaps in many other aspects of his life, he was not at all worthy of praise.
- When Peter brings this term into the NT – he is going beyond just the intellectual aspects of the praiseworthiness of a particular aspect of behavior and he is speaking to the entire life and moral character of a person.
- This is much more than just sexual purity – this is the term for a person or an object who fulfills the purpose for which they were created in a way worthy of praise.
- Illustration: A knife/sword is made to cut. When it cuts cleanly and sharply – it is excellent. When it cuts poorly or when it is used for some other purpose – then whatever else it may be, it is not “excellent” or “virtuous”.
- So “virtue” here is the idea of moral excellence
- It is a moral excellence that applies to the whole of a person’s life and not just one part.
- And at the heart of this “moral excellence” is the idea of accomplishing the mission we have been set apart to do.

What exactly does this sort of moral excellence look like?

III. Virtue Described – what does it look like?

- There are many ways to answer this but the best way might be to let Peter himself tell us – from the paragraph earlier in the chapter where he used this term. (2 Peter 1:3)

2 Peter 1:3 – Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

- Whatever “virtue/moral excellence” is – it looks like Jesus!
- Jesus was full of “goodness” – which is the term Peter uses for “virtue” in 1:5.

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- In other words – if we want to be virtuous – we need to bring lavish amounts of Christlikeness to our lives!
- We need to look like Jesus! And Peter has already told us that this is precisely what God has called us to – to share in Christ's nature (glory) and to display His character (goodness).

So – what exactly does Christ-likeness look like in us? How is it manifested?

IV. Virtue Displayed – how is it manifested?

So what does manifesting Jesus in our life look like?

A. *We need to think and respond/feel like Jesus thought and responded when He was on earth.*

- He was lowly or poor in spirit – he was humble.
- He was meek and gentle
- He was internally motivated by a passionate desire for righteousness (hunger and thirst)
- He was full of mercy
- He was singular in His loyalty and devotion to God (no divided heart about this)
- He was committed to establishing and maintaining harmony with God and with those who were willing to be led by God.

B. *We need to say and do what Jesus said and did while He was on earth*

I only say and I always do what my Father sent me to do and what I see the Father doing! (John 5)

C. *We need to feel like Jesus felt about the people and circumstances that were the context of his earthly life.*

For example:

- How did he feel about sinners - people caught up and overcome by horrific sin? The Adulterous Woman
- How did he feel about social outcasts, the untouchables? the leper, the woman with an issue of blood
- How did he feel about the helpless? – the blind men
- How did he feel about religious hypocrisy? – Pharisees, Temple merchants.

He was moved with compassion for the plight of sinful people ruined by sin and broken by other sinners!

D. *We need to endure the sufferings and afflictions of life as Jesus endured them (1 Peter 2:21-24)*

*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, **but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously:** 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

E. We need to live for the goal and objective that Jesus lived for in life – Thy will be done (Matt 6:10; 26:39,42).

Which brings us to the final question that rises up out of a careful, intentional consideration of Peter's text – “**How is such virtue and Christlikeness cultivated in life?**”

V. Virtue Developed – how is it cultivated?

- **Peter's answer to this is “knowledge”!**
- Cultivating moral excellence demands “knowledge” (gnosis).
- He has already told us that the Christian life is more than having right information about God – it is about having a personal relationship and experience with God through Christ (epignosis in 1:2, 3)
- However, Peter now is talking to people who have an intimate and experiential relationship with God through Christ and he is telling them that cultivating Christ-likeness will demand “knowledge” or “gnosis”.
- This term has reference to a body of information (wisdom) and the ability to use that wisdom skillfully (discernement).
- In other words – cultivating moral excellence (Christlikeness) means we have to know a certain body of truth and we need to know what to do with that body of truth.
- We need to know how to apply it rightly to the people and circumstances that God brings into our lives so that, by displaying our character through our conduct, people will come to right conclusions about God – who He is and what He is like.
- AND there is only 1 source for this knowledge – the Word.
- And there is only one way to develop discernment – and that is by using the Word! (Heb 6:14).

Conclusion:

- So . . . what does this mean for me and you personally and for us corporately? **We must be word-centered!**
- We must be word focused individually and we must be word-centered corporately.
- And this is much more than having a bible full of good notes! It may start there but it can't end there.

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1. It must result in a church that is ***living for the priorities/values*** that are established in the Word (governed by the Word)
2. It must result in a church that is ***increasingly marked by the Character*** of her Head as taught by the Word. (growing in the Word)
3. It must result in a church that is ***radically committed to fulfilling the commission*** revealed in the Word to proclaim the excellencies of the One Who called them out of darkness! Others ought to be coming to the Light! (guided and guarded and by the Word)

Cultivating Christian Character
The Secret of Self-Control
Learning to Say No!
2 Peter 1:5-11 (Series)
Sermon 5

Text

2 Peter 1:5-11 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 **and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,** 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 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; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Introduction:

- For four weeks now we have been examining one of the most significant paragraphs in the NT related to growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- The 11 verses that make up the opening paragraph to Peter's 2nd Epistle contain the heart and soul of living meaningfully and navigating life successfully in order to accomplish the purpose for which God has called believers out of spiritual darkness and into His marvelous, glorious light.
- We noted that this paragraph is structured into three primary segments:
 1. A opening segment (1:1-4) that reminds believers of the incredible work that God has done and the magnificent provision that He has lavishly given which make the mission even possible to start with!
 2. A final segment (1:8-11) designed to motivate believers by showing the incredible benefit to engaging in the mission while on this journey and the spiritual disadvantage to not making the effort to engage properly and intentionally in what Peter is instructing them to do.
 3. The middle segment (1:5-7) where Peter lays out the pathway to living life successfully by engaging in cultivating a specific kind of character that both the essential component and the primary means by which the Christian mission of proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into light is to be accomplished – adding certain things to the living faith God has graciously imparted to us.

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- For the last two of the four sessions, we have been examining this passage and we have discovered that at the heart of fulfilling the Christian mission in a pagan culture lies the cultivation of a certain kind of character -- one that looks exactly like the Lord's!
- We might say **that verses 1-4 are the foundation/bedrock** on which this character is built. And that bedrock is a saving faith that is living, authentic, and growing!
- We might say that **verse 5 describes the soil in which Christ-like character is cultivated.** That soil consists of a specific seed – moral excellence that is nurtured by a specific nutrient – knowledge.
 - a. Moral Excellence – Embracing God's purpose to develop and display the character of Jesus Christ in my own character and conduct so that I might proclaim the excellencies of the One who has called me out of darkness and into His marvelous light.
 - b. Knowledge – Acquiring and implementing a Spirit-taught, Word-informed understanding of the ways and works of Jesus Christ for the purpose of conforming my ways and my works to His.

These two virtues produce in me both an understanding of and a commitment to the mission God has called me to do for His glory so that those in darkness may come to right opinions about God.

- However – once the soil had been prepared and the seed has been planted and watered – what will be required to nourish, protect, and train up this Spirit-empowered, Word-driven Christlikeness that God is forming in me?
- Peter answers this question in v 7 by pointing to a set of three virtues designed to help me live like Christ consistently and courageously in a hostile environment! (Temperance, Patience, and Godliness).
- **Tonight we want to look at the first of these – temperance!**
- ***Perhaps the best way to grasp what Peter has in mind is to ask and attempt to let the NT answer four basic questions about this virtue.***

VI. What Is It? (*Temperance Defined*)

- Best way sometimes to define a Bible term is to look at how it is used in other contexts.
- This term is a fairly rare term in the NT – it occurs 6x and it is used primarily by two NT Apostles – Peter and Paul.
- The first place you encounter this term in the NT is perhaps the most helpful in giving us an understanding of what is in view when this term is used.

1. ***Acts 24:24-25***

But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you."

- Paul has been arrested in Jerusalem – and a plot hatched against him (Acts 23)
- God miraculously uncovered the plot and moved in the heart of the Roman Commander sent Paul protected by an 470 armed men to Herod's palace in Ceasarea (Acts 23)
- In chapter 24 – He appears before the highest Roman official in the province of Judea – Felix Augustus.
- Felix was arguably one of the most powerful and best connected Roman official in the entire province.
- He had married a granddaughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra and was related by this marriage to the Roman emperor Claudius.
- First 21 verses of chapter 24 recount the trial mounted against Paul by Annaias the High Priest and argued by a professional lawyer named Tertullus.
- That trial ended without a verdict – Felix postponed deciding on the case until the commander of the Roman fortress in Jerusalem arrived to give his side of the story.
- IN THE INTERVENING TIME – THERE WAS A PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN PAUL, FELIX, AND HIS WIFE DRUSILLA.
- Drusilla is an interesting character in this story – Luke makes a point to remind his readers that she was Jewess – and a very well-connected one at that!
- She was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I – who was the grandson of Herod the Great.
- We met this Herod way back in Acts 12 when he imprisoned Peter and James – and beheaded James.
- Then later in the chapter, Herod had been eaten up by worms in an arena located on the premises of this very place where Paul was meeting with Felix and Drusilla – this was her Father.
- Her brother was Herod Agrippa II – who had taken over his father's kingship and was in charge of this very palace! Paul is going to appear before him (Drusilla's brother) in the very next chapter (Acts 25:23-26:32)
- BACK TO DRUSILLA
- Herod, her father, in an effort to secure his kingship had married her to a minor king of a province in Syria when she was 14.
- Drusilla was renown for her beauty – Josephus stated that “she did indeed exceed all other women in beauty”.

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- And – she caught the eye of a powerful married man named Felix. IN FACT – Felix had put away his first wife and was currently married to his second wife.
- He was smitten by Drusilla's beauty – and went to great lengths to persuade her to leave her husband and marry him after he divorced his second wife.
- In fact, he was so desperate that he procured the services of a well-known magician from Cyprus to enchant her into loving him.
- All of his promises and efforts apparently paid off – and he won Drusilla. Her second marriage; His third.
- And this is precisely what Paul has in mind in his private visit with Felix and Drusilla.
- He spoke to them about righteousness – what they had done was unrighteous.
- He spoke to them about self-control – this is why they had done it! They both had yielded to their desires/passions – he for her beauty; she for position, power, and pleasures.
- He spoke to them about the judgment to come – a future accounting for their actions.
- AND they feared!
- NOW – this gives us our clearest picture of what this term meant in the NT world. Self-control is precisely what Felix did not have.
 - He saw
 - He desired
 - He took
- He refused to restrain his desires and took action to gratify them.
- This is hedonism – an unrestrained exercise of desire.
- Self-Control – is the exact opposite.

Temperance is Self-Control – a mastering of the strong desires and impulses that arise in us due to the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life.

2. ***Galatians 5:23*** – one of the fruits of the Spirit listed here in Galatians 5:22-23. So all Christians are supposed to manifest this as a result of the indwelling presence of the Spirit.
3. ***Titus 1:8*** – one of the qualities in the list of qualifications demanded of an elder. So it is especially demanded of those in positions of spiritual leadership.
4. ***1 Cor 7:8-9*** – instruction related to sexual purity.
But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. 9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

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5. **1 Cor 9:25** – not just needed in the area of sexual purity – but in all of life!

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

VII. Why Is It Important? (*Temperance Demanded*)

- Many passages in the NT that speak to the importance of this virtue – but the primary passage in Peter is 1 Peter 1:13-16.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

- Why is this virtue so important?
- Because we are supposed to reflect the character of God as manifested in Christ – and here is what God is like: Holy!
- Here is what you used to be like when you were ignorant of the gospel – you were shaped and fashioned by the lusts and desires that used to be yours and that you now see in the pagan people around you!
- BUT YOU ARE NOT LIKE THIS ANY MORE – you used be children of disobedience and under wrath. Now you are children of obedience living under Grace!
- So – because of who God is and what He is like and who you are and what He intends to do with you – you must not live an unrestrained life governed by your former passions/desires.

VIII. How Is It Manifested? (*Temperance Displayed*)

- Here is what it looks like on a practical level:

1 Peter 2:11-12: Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

- A. It looks like abstaining from or restraining the natural desires of our flesh that wage war against us.

- B. It looks like keeping our conduct and behavior excellent among the pagans so that they can't legitimatize the slander they bring against us.
- C. And the primary way in which we express this is by submitting properly to all of our God-established authorities (2:13-3:7).
- D. And the primary area in which this will be tested is when we suffer under or because of those very authorities!

IX. How is it Cultivated and Sustained? (*Temperance Developed*)

So – how is this quality of self-control cultivate in us and sustained consistently as we are bombarded by the lusts of our flesh, the lust of our eyes, and pride of life that so marks this current passing-away-age?

Answer: God given enablement through the Spirit's ministry!

Self-control is a Spirit-enabled restraint of my natural desires so that I may conform my behavior to that of Christ!

Two texts teach us this in Peter:

- **1 Peter 1:5-7 – The Protection of God our Father**
who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- **2 Peter 1:3 – The Provision of Unrestrained Power for the restrain of our flesh!**
seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Conclusion: This all speaks of the work God has assigned to the 3rd member of the God-head to accomplish in us – Sanctification!

1 Peter 1:1-2 – The Sanctifying Work of the Spirit

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

- One of the ministries of the HS is the ongoing sanctification of those who have been called by the Father to share in His glory by progressively making them more and more like His Son!
- And the primary means by which this is accomplished is the Word – and the primary means by which this Word is burned into us is Suffering! Which is why we need the next quality – endurance.

Self Control
Spirit Controlled Living in our Skin

Introduction:

We have been talking about what is required for fulfilling the mission God has given to each of us as glory bearers.

We know that our mission in life is to glory God – to cause other people to come to right conclusions about God – who he is and what he is like – so that they will give him his proper place in their lives.

And to prepare us for this mission, God has made available to us everything that we need for this journey.

- He has given us a specific list of qualities we need to add to our lives
- He has told us to bring lavish quantities of these qualities to our lives

So far in our preparation for the journey we have discovered that we need:

1. Virtue – purposing to develop and display the character of Jesus Christ to the glory of God.
2. Knowledge – learning the person, words, and ways of Jesus – what he was like.
3. Self-Control – yielding instant obedience to the Word of God by the power of His Spirit.

We learned that Self-Control is not us determining to better in our own strength and by our own strategies. Rather – self-control is us determining in our heart that we will obey whatever God has said in His Word.

- This will require that we not be double-minded (James:1-5)!
- This will require that we cultivate submissive hearts that respect and reverence God above all other people or priorities (Ephesians 5:21)
- We learned that a good barometer of this is our relationship to the flawed earthly authorities God has put into our lives!
- And there is a good test for this – submission is not how you respond when someone asks you to do what you already want to do – it is when they ask you to do something they have the right to ask you to do that you would prefer not having to do!

So with that in mind – let us take one last look at self-control in a passage that will help us to grasp it accurately and embrace it fully as we attempt to put it to work in our life: (1 Cor 7)

NOTE: This chapter is a further explanation and application of a primary truth that Paul articulated to the Corinthians in 6:19-20.

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NOTE: The Corinthians were believers who were called to display the glory of the One who had called them out of darkness into light and they were called to do this in a very dark and difficult place!

- Spiritually dark
- Morally depraved
- Personally difficult

Paul makes seven powerful observations to them out of this passage:

I. Self-Control starts by embracing the truth that you do not belong to yourself but to Another. (6:19-20)

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which is God's.

II. Self-Control embraces the responsibility that you must not live for your own pleasure and benefit – rather you must please Another! (7:22-23) (also 7:3-4)

For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freed-man. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

III. Satan is Determined to Distract and Divert you from fulfilling your Mission – and His primary tool is Temptation. (7:5)

So that Satan does not tempt you.

- Satan – name of Satan that tells you his relationship to you – Adversary – Enemy
- Strategy he employs – to tempt you!
- The DNA of Temptation
 1. Strong Internal Desire
 2. External Bait

So – what are the primary desires that Satan uses?

A. Lust of the Flesh – desire to experience or do

- Speaks to my morals
- Desire to experience pleasure or satisfy my desire for something outside of God's permission or God's time.
- Fundamental discontentment with my circumstance and experience in life.

B. Lust of the Eyes - desire to have or own

- Speaks to my values
- Desire to possess or have
- Fundamental discontent with God's provision or placement of my life.

C. Pride of Life - desire to be

- Speaks to my motivation and worship in life (what drives me and what or who do I really worship)
- Fundamental discontentment with God and His right to direct and govern my life.

So – how does temptation work through these strong desires?

IV. Temptation only works if we lack Self-Control (7:5,9)

So that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control ..

Remember what self-control is:

Yielding instant obedience to the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit

So . . . another way of describing self-control is this: Walking by the Spirit!

Walk (live your life) according to what the Spirit has measured out – and what He has measured out is His Word!

And here is what the Spirit wrote down for you to keep in mind:

A. You have a responsibility to live for someone else's glory!

B. You have an enemy that is determined to stop you from living for the Lord.

C. He is going to use your strong desires to tempt you to live for your self or to live for your sinful desires.

V. The Primary Strategy and Indispensable Necessity for overcoming any temptation is Self-Control

Galatians 5:16-17 I say then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things you wish.

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Very interesting way this verse ends: you do not do the things you wish!

- A. ***If you are a born again believer and you walk according to your flesh – then you are not doing the things that your new heart desires just like Paul in Romans 7.***
- B. ***If you are walking by the Spirit then you are not doing the things that your flesh wants to do!***

Either way – life in the Spirit and living under His control means you are not doing what you want to do!

So – if I am not living to please myself – what is driving me?

VI. Self-Control must spring from one over-arching desire – to please the Lord! (7:19; 34)

...Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters!

.... she cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit!

A. Internal Loyalty to God

B. External Purity before God

VII. Self-Control must be Intentionally Cultivated (7:37)

Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart ...

A. Standing Steadfastly in Heart

B. Having Power/Control over his Will

C. Having Determined to do

Cultivating Christian Character
Persevering Under Pressure
2 Peter 1:5-11 (Series)
Sermon 6

Text: 2 Peter 1:6

*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,*

Introduction:

Peter is writing to believers who have been called to proclaim the praises of the One who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The way they are to engage in this proclamation will come primarily through the manner in which they live – their walk for Christ will give weight to their words about Him and His gospel.

And in order for their walk to have weight – it must come out of a certain character that accurately and attractively reflects the character of Christ.

Peter has reminded his readers that although God provided both the foundation and the enablement for the formulation of this character – they must engage persistently and intentionally in the formation and display of Christ-like character.

This process begins with a commitment to cultivate moral excellence in one's life by developing and displaying the character of Jesus Christ in my life and conduct.

This moral excellence is informed by knowledge of the ways and work of Jesus Christ gained from the Word of God.

And displaying this Christ-like character in life will require a Spirit-energized willingness to say no to the strong desires that rise up from within us – self-control.

And that brings us to the next two virtues on the list – perserverence and godliness.

If we are committed to displaying Christ-like character that is truly informed and guided by the Word of God and accompanied by a Spirit-enabled willingness to say no to our flesh – what will be required to sustain this sort of life when it comes under the fire of severe and extended testing? And what will motivate us to continue to live this way in spite of the extreme price that will be demanded of us?

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Peter provided the answer in the next two virtues on the list: perseverance and godliness.

I. What is Perseverence?

The term “perseverance” comes from the greek term (*uJpomonh/n*) and occurs 32x in NT

Literal meaning is to “remain under”

Idea behind the term is that of enduring / persevering in the face of pressure or resistance.

There are four primary circumstances in which this term occurs:

- A. *In a Military Context – endurance or resistance in a battle*
- B. *In an Athletic Context – endurance in a contest*
- C. *In a Societal Context – resistance against or endurance in spite of pressure*
- D. *In a Religious Context – to remain constant or faithful in spite of ridicule or persecution*

In other words – endurance or perseverance involves the concept of remaining faithful to something or someone and doing so for a sustained time under severe pressure or opposition. It is courage that remains constant under fire!

One other component needs to be factored into our understanding of this term.

Endurance is not a stoic passivity that just endures whatever is thrown against it – ***there is an active attitude that accompanies this term – there is an expression of triumphant, joyful courageousness!***

So proclaiming the excellencies of Christ to a fallen culture that is hostile toward us will require joyful, courageous, triumphant faithfulness to Christ for a sustained period of time (our life) under severe pressure and opposition!

II. When is it Called For?

- A. *When we face extended trials and prolonged suffering. (1 Peter 1:6-7)*
6 in this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- B. *When we are confronted with and affected by the wicked behavior of unbelievers around us and over us*

- 1 Peter 2:12 – in the face of rampant wickedness
Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.
- 1 Peter 2:13-15 – when you are under pagan authorities
Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.
- 1 Peter 2:18-20 – when you are unfairly abused by wicked masters.
Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

**C. When we face the relentless pressure of the desires of our flesh
(1 Peter 2:11)**

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

D. When we are exhausted and frustrated by the demands that come upon us from serving our brethren in Christ

(1 Peter 4:9-10) Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

III. How is it Manifested?

A. Rejoicing in the Midst of Suffering

1 Peter 1:6-7: In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

B. Resisting the Desires of the Flesh

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12

C. Refusing to participate in Pagan disobedience

- 1 Peter 1:14-15

- 1 Peter 2:12; 1 Peter 4:1-5
- D. **Submitting to our earthly authorities**
 - 1 Peter 2:13-14
 - 1 Peter 3:1

IV. Where is this Modeled for us?

1 Peter 2:21-23: *For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,*

22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;

23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats,

but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

V. What will it Require of us?

- A. **A constant and consistent trust in God's Faithfulness during our suffering:**

1 Peter 4:19: *Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

- B. **A persistent obedience in the midst of suffering**

1 Peter 4:19: *Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

- C. **A humble submission to God for the duration of our suffering**

1 Peter 5:6-7: *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*

Conclusion: So – what will sustain this over the long haul?

What will fuel this sort of triumphant, courageous resistance in the face of fierce opposition?

Peter's answer is simple – godliness.

This term occurs 15x in the NT and it would have been immediately recognized as a familiar concept to Peter's readers.

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The world of their day was inherently religious – every aspect of life was governed by and observed by the gods.

And so people lived their lives in a concerted effort to please their gods in order to procure their favor. Nothing was done without due consideration for how it might look to the gods.

And Peter is telling us that we will only be able to live this way if we adopt this mindset with regard to the true God --- we must live our lives not in an effort to procure our own pleasure but to gain His!

We must live in lives that are motivated by a God-honoring devotion to Jesus Christ that displays itself in a concentrated effort to please Him in all things!

Cultivating Christian Character
Living by Love
2 Peter 1:5-11 (Series)
Sermon 7

Text: 2 Peter 1:7

*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.*

Introduction:

Fred Bennett owned an eating establishment in Nelson, New Zealand. In an effort to attract a fairly large Thai population in his town, he decided to start offering Thai food on the menu. And he wanted to spread the word! He asked his chef, who spoke Thai, for a Thai name to put out on his sign and his chef gave him a phrase which meant “Welcome and see you again!”

Months went by without much response from the Thai community. Those who did come, often did not return. Eventually his original chef moved away and he hired a new chef. The first thing she asked when she came to work was why he had named his restaurant “Go Away and Don’t Come Back!”

Peter is writing to believers who have been called to proclaim the praises of the One who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

With Peter’s readers, we also have been called to represent the most important message ever communicated to the Human race and we are to do so accurately and attractively.

The primary way they are to engage in this proclamation will come primarily through the manner in which we live – our walk for Christ will give weight to our words about Him and His gospel.

And so that the message we have been called to proclaim is not “lost in the translation” – our walk must come out of a certain character that accurately and attractively reflects the character of Christ.

This process begins with a commitment to cultivate moral excellence in one’s life by developing and displaying the character of Jesus Christ in my life and conduct.

This moral excellence is informed by knowledge of the ways and work of Jesus Christ gained from the Word of God.

And displaying this Christ-like character in life will require a Spirit-energized willingness to say no to the strong desires that rise up from within us – self-control.

And that self-control must endure in the face of difficulty as it seeks to please God in all things (godliness).

And that brings us to the final two virtues on the list – brotherly kindness and love.

If we are committed to displaying Christ-like character that makes a real impact on the lives of others – it must be marked by two virtues that are essential to the message of the Gospel that proclaims God's grace and mercy to sinful people.

So why are these virtues so important and what do they look like in real life when we are surrounded by people who are either hard to love or hostile toward us?

VI. The Demand for Love

Nothing makes us more like God than when we extend love to those who don't love us.

Peter has been talking about the internal virtues that are necessary for the cultivation and development of Christlike character – virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, and godliness.

Now he brings two final virtues that are essential to the communication and display of Christlike character to others!

Those virtues are “brotherly kindness” and “love” and they represent the heart and soul of the Christian message!

These virtues are not optional for believers – their presence is an essential component of a life that pleases God.

A. *Commanded of all Believers*

- **Rom 12:10** *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*
- **Heb. 13:1** *Let love of the brethren continue.*
- **1Pet. 1:22** *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,*
- So whatever else we may be doing as a believer, if our life is not marked by these qualities, we are not obedient.

B. Evidenced by the Early Church

- **1 Th. 4:9** Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; **10** for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,
- Whatever else may mark our church – doctrinal purity, biblical literacy, etc., if these qualities do not mark our church, then we are not following the pattern and example of the early church!

C. Goal of Biblical Instruction

- **1 Tim 1:5** But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
- We sit as one of the best taught congregations in our State – for the last 30 years we have had extraordinary exposition of Scripture under the extended ministry of men like Doug McLachlan, Ernest Pickering, and more recently M Morrell.
- What is the goal of all of this instruction? What should it be producing in us personally and corporately – in huge and identifiable quantities? LOVE!

D. Mark of Christian Maturity

- **Col. 3:12** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; **13** bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. **14** Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.
- The ultimate mark of Christian maturity in a believer or a congregation is the evidence of Christ-like love for others.
- So – as a congregation that has been around in this city for as many years as we have – what are we known for in our community? Do the people in this city know Fourth Baptist Church for our love?
- They know us for our music. They know us for our standards. They know us for our educational values. They know us for our conservative stand for truth.
- All of this is good and well – but do they know us as a congregation marked by love?
- Well – of course they do! Are you sure about that? Ask them!

VII. The Descriptions of Love

So what does this sort of love look like?

Peter gives it two primary expressions:

E. **Brotherly Kindness** (filadelfian)

- This term would have been a very familiar term to Peter's readers – and they would have understood it in a very specific way.
- This term spoke of the affection and responsibility that one had toward other members of his family.
- This was far more than just the way someone felt toward another family member – it spoke of:
 - The actions would display toward others in his family.
 - The responsibilities one would fulfill toward others in his family.
- Everyone in Peter's world understood and embraced this concept – but what made it so impacting is that Peter's readers displayed this sort of love to others who were not normally considered part of one's family.
- They displayed it toward anyone who was part of the community of faith!
- **Definition:** *a God-sourced affection and service toward those who are in the house-hold of faith!*

F. **Love** (aÓga;phn)

- Not only were Peter's readers to cultivate and display Christlike love toward those in the house-hold of faith – they were called to exercise this very sort of love toward another group of people – those who were hostile to the faith!
- People who not only did not embrace their faith – but who were hostile toward them.
- And they were to do this intentionally, consistently, and tangibly!
- **Definition:** *A God-imitating mindset that Scripturally and sacrificially meets the needs of others even at the expense of self.*

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So – what will be required of us if we are to take the cultivation of these virtues seriously?

VIII. The Disposition of Love

E. *It will Require Selfless Devotion to meeting the legitimate needs of other believers.*

- Their physical needs – provision
- Their spiritual needs - instruction
- Their relational needs – forgiveness / mercy / grace
- For the good of the Church!

F. *It will Require Sacrificial Compassion for those who are outside of the Faith.*

- When they revile us
- When they abuse us
- When they martyr us
- For the sake of the Gospel!

IX. The Display of Love

A. *Joseph*

1. Toward His brothers and family
2. Toward Unbelievers

B. *Jesus*

1. Toward His brothers
2. Toward Unbelievers

X. The Development of Love

D. *A persistent pursuit of these Virtues*

- Christlikeness
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Endurance
- Godliness

E. *A constant and consistent display of these Qualities*

Eph 4.2-3 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- Humility

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- Gentleness
- Longsuffering
- Forbearance

Conclusion: So – why is this so important?

Because of the mission that God is on – to redeem fallen men and restore the image of God in broken men!

And He is doing this through a group of people who have become His disciples – His students!

And there is a clear and identifying quality that marks men and women who have been transformed by this message – they love each other!

John 13:35 – by this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another!

And this is important because of what God has called them to display to their enemies – the sort of love that He displayed toward them when they were yet in their sins!

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

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EMBRACING YOUR MISSION

I Corinthians 10:31

A. Adam

God's designated IMAGE BEARER

B. Moses

God's glory VISUALLY EXPRESSED

C. Eli the High Priest and David the Great King

God's glory DESPISED

D. Ezekiel

God's glory DEPARTED

E. Jesus

God's glory RETURNED

F. Believers in the Church Age

God's glory DEPOSITED

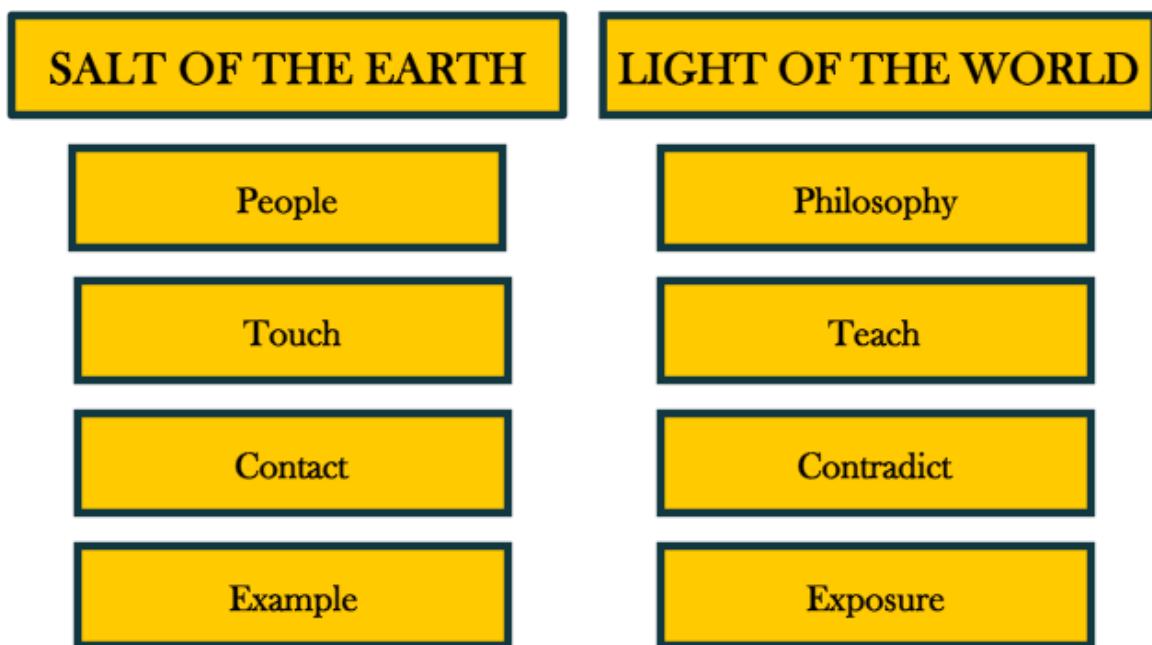
Called to be
Glory-Bearers

A. Out of the world – John 17:6

Our position – purging

B. In the world – John 17:11

Our presence



CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WHO IMPACTED THEIR CULTURE:

- ◊ Discerning
- ◊ Doctrinal
- ◊ Different
- ◊ Despised
- ◊ Difference makers

Embracing Your Mission

God's highest priority is His glory. From the very beginning of the story of the human race, God has desired to display His glory in, to, and through His highest created being, man.

Genesis 1:26 makes this abundantly clear when we are told that man was made in God's "image." God intended for the rest of creation to see a display of His glory in man who had been created to display the communicable attributes of God to the rest of the world.

Our mission in life as believers is to glorify God. Glorifying God is to give others a right opinion of God so that they will give God His rightful place in their lives. As believers, we are to do this by reflecting the communicable attributes of God in our lives. The communicable attributes of God are the parts of His character that humans can share with Him.

There are parts of God's nature that no one else can share. For example, no one but God is infinite. No one but God is omnipresent. No one but God is omniscient and omnipotent.

But, there are attributes of God that we can share. We can be holy like God is holy. We can love because God is love. We can be wise. We can be just. We can be merciful. These are the communicable attributes of God because these attributes are ones He shares with His people.

In the Bible, God's glory was always represented by something that pointed to His visible presence among His people. From the beginning, God has given His people the mission of displaying His glory.

1. Adam – God's designated _____.

Genesis 1:26 reveals that Adam was created in "God's image." In other words, unlike all of the rest of creation, God designed Adam for a unique purpose – to bear His image so that Adam might display His glory to all of the earth.

Tragically, this designated glory bearer was marred and ruined by sin at the fall. And God's glory would have to be displayed to the world by other means.

2. Moses – God's glory _____.

In light of the huge task before him of leading God's people out of Egypt and to the Land of Promise, Moses cried out in desperation, "Show me Your glory!" And God did! (Exodus 33:10).

And not only did God show Moses His glory, He gave to Moses a pattern by which God's people could see the symbols of His visible presence among them. These

patterns were a tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. And for hundreds of years they existed at the center of Israel's worship as reminders and visible expressions of the glory God wanted to display to the world.

3. Eli the High Priest and David the Great King – God's glory _____.

Several hundred years after Moses received the patterns for the ark and the tabernacle, God's Word records that His people began to despise His glory and treated the symbols of that glory carelessly and contemptuously.

Eli was the high priest of Israel at a time when God's glory was particularly despised. His own sons had handled the glory of God so carelessly that God slew them and allowed His ark to be carried away by the pagan Philistine army who defeated Israel in battle. His grandson was named *Ichabod* which means *the Glory has departed* (I Samuel 4:21-22).

Eventually the ark returned and David was so overjoyed that the Bible states he danced for joy. However, not everyone was so excited to see the ark. David's own wife saw her husband leaping for joy in the sight of all the people and was so embarrassed that she despised him in her heart. She had no heart for God's glory but rather was more concerned with her public image.

In both accounts, the ark of God was despised by the very people who should have rejoiced in the privilege God had given them to possess His glory.

4. Ezekiel – God's glory _____.

By the time we get to Ezekiel's day, the tabernacle had been replaced by a permanent building, the Temple. The holiest room in that temple housed the ark of God. God's glory visibly resided in that temple for all the nation of Israel to see.

And those who were responsible to care for the temple and guard the holy glory of God had become so careless that eventually God's glory departed (Ezekiel 8-10).

The reason for the departure of the glory of God is the incredible hidden wickedness that God's people had brought into the inner chambers of His temple (Ezekiel 8:6).

Even though everything looked great on the outside and the temple worship went on as usual, things were very different on the inside where God was looking – and because of these tolerated abominations in His house, God removed His glory, and it would not return until Jesus was born.

5. Jesus – God's glory _____.

John tells us that when they looked at Jesus they beheld the glory of God (John 1:14). When Jesus came to earth, He brought back the glory of God and displayed it to the world!

But, eventually, Jesus returned to His Father's presence. So what happened to that glory? Where is it today?

6. Believers in the Church Age - God's glory _____.

In what may be the greatest chapter in the New Testament (John 17), Jesus reveals that God's glory has remained in His Church (Ephesians 3:21) and that the members of His Church are to display His glory in all areas of their lives:

Matthew 5:16 – “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and *glorify your Father* which is in heaven.”

I Corinthians 6:19-20 – “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore *glorify God* in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

I Corinthians 10:31 – “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God.*”

Philippians 1:20 – “. . . so now also *Christ shall be magnified* in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”

Ephesians 3:21 – “*Unto him be glory in the church* by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

CALLED TO BE GLORY-BEARERS

How do we as believers glorify God in this age – the Church Age?
How do believers function in this world as God's glory-bearers?

A. _____ of the _____ (John 17:6)

Our _____ - purging

B. _____ the _____ (John 17:11)

Our _____

<i>Salt of the Earth</i>	<i>Light of the World</i>
People	Philosophy
Touch	Teach
Contact	Contradict
Example	Exposure

C. _____ of the _____ (John 17:14-16)

Our _____

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Not Isolation
Not Assimilation
But Insulation

The believer's temptation is to be "credible," not offensive, as it sincerely seeks to reach this culture.

A stance that starts out commendably with a passion for relevance moves through four steps to end disastrously in unfaithfulness and irrelevance.
(Oz Guinness)

- 1) Assumption – assuming that something the world is doing is superior to what Christians know or do.
- 2) Abandonment – truths or customs that do not fit in with the modern assumption are put up in the creedal attic to collect dust.
- 3) Adaptation – something new is assumed; something old is abandoned; and everything else is adapted.
- 4) Assimilation – this is the logical culmination of the first three.

D. _____ into the _____ (John 17:18-26)

Our _____

Characteristics of people who impacted their culture:

D_____

D_____

D_____

D_____

D_____ makers

LABORING TOGETHER

“The gospel’s spread is hindered by the messenger not the message”

I Corinthians 1:10

“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”

I Corinthians 1:10

- Divisive speech – orations
- Divisive schism – organizations
- Divisive spirit - opinions

I Corinthians 1:11-13

- Personality Cults
 - Paul – educated
 - Apollos – eloquent
 - Cephas – eminent
 - Christ - elite

I Corinthians 3:1-4

- Carnality was the problem
- Sarkinos – fleshy (3:1)
- Sarkikos – fleshly (3:3)

LABORERS TOGETHER

I Corinthians 3:9-10^[1]

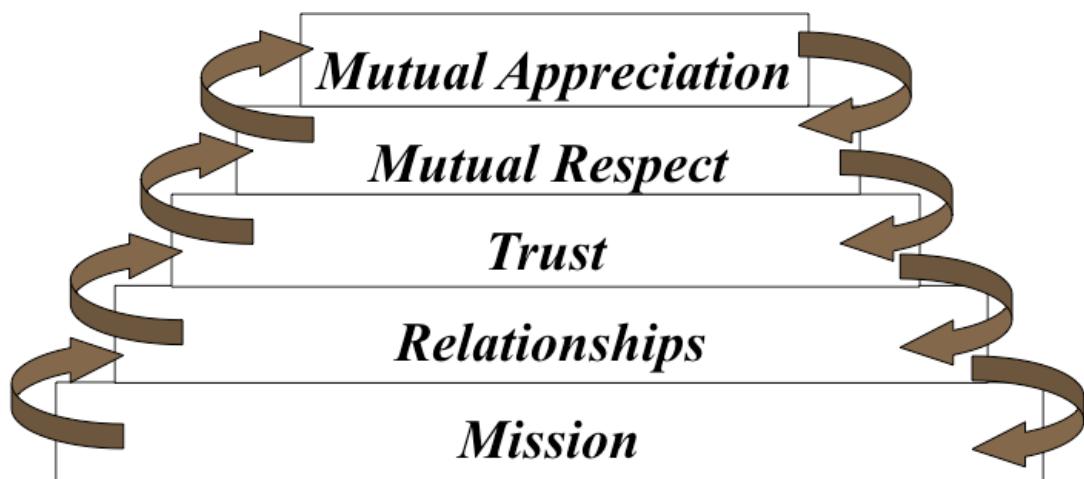
Galatians 5:19-26

I. The Function - I Corinthians 3:9;
Laborers - Union

- A. Reason
- B. Role
- C. Responsibility

II. The Fellowship - I Corinthians 3:9;^[1] Together - Unity

- A. Order
- B. Obstacles/Sin –Galatians 5:19-21
 - 1. Rank sins
 - 2. Religious sins
 - 3. Relationship sins



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Relationship Sins

- a. Hatred
 - “Echthra” – opposite of love. Nurtures a hostile attitude toward someone else.
- b. Variance
 - “Eris” – strife, quarrelsomeness, rivalry, animosity, Cain’s animosity toward Abel.
- c. Emulations
 - “Zelos” – zeal, jealousy, search for significance, always have to be better than my “rival”
- d. Wrath
 - “Thumos” – hot anger and passion. God’s wrath is always righteous; ours is almost always sinful. Jealousy fermenting in the soul is expressed outwardly in anger.
- e. Strife
 - “Eritheia” – factions, rivalry, party spirit, Diotrepes— III John 9-11. Root meaning - “hireling.” desire to win a following.
- f. Seditions
 - “Dichostasia” – standing apart dichotomy. Romans 16:17 mark those who cause divisions
- g. Heresies
 - “Hairisis” – Acts 5:17 – Sadducees; Acts 15:5 – Pharisees. Tertullus used this word against Paul. The sect of the Nazarenes. Acts 24:5 – creates a cause and demands a following
- h. Envyings
 - “Phthonos” – used in a bad way. Matthew 27:10; Mark 15:10; Romans 1:29; Philippians 1:15; I Timothy 6:4; Titus 3:3; James 4:5; I Peter 1:21. Jesus delivered to the Romans out of Envy. Matthew 27:18 – Malicious, spiteful spirit

II. The Fellowship - I Corinthians 3:9;^[1] Together - Unity

C. Objectives – Ephesians 4:29-32

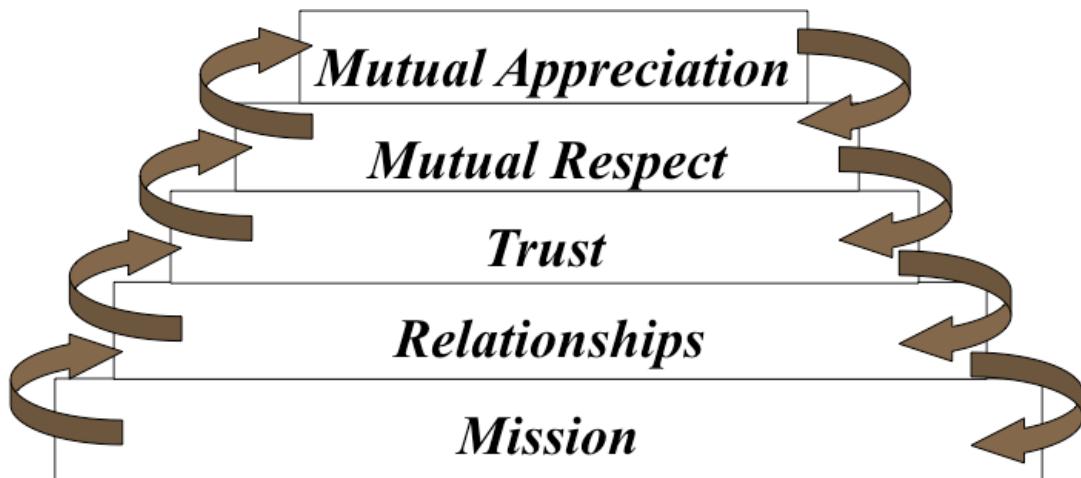
- 1. God's Glory
- 2. Others' Good

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III. The Fruit - Galatians 5:22-23; Unction

- A. Love
- B. Joy
- C. Peace
- D. Longsuffering
- E. Gentleness
- F. Goodness
- G. Faith
- H. Meekness
- I. Temperance

HOW MISSIONS WORKS



GROWING THE CHURCH

Ephesians 4:7-13

Living out the theology of spiritual unity is the key to growing the body of Christ.

I. The essentials for growth: GIFTED leadership

When a person gets saved he receives GIFTS to function in the body of Christ.

Two things accompany the gifts:

- A. GRACE (Ephesians 4:7)
- B. FAITH (Romans 12:3-5)

John Philips summarized the five gifts listed in the following way: (Ephesians 4:7-11)

1. Those gifted to deal with situations

- a. Those equipped to GUIDE the infant church in ways in ought to go (Apostles)
- b. Those equipped to GUARD the infant church in what it ought to KNOW (Prophets)

2. Those gifted to deal with SINNERS (Evangelists)

3. Those gifted to deal with SAINTS

- a. Those called to TEND the flock of God (Pastors)
- b. Those called to TEACH the flock of God (Teachers)

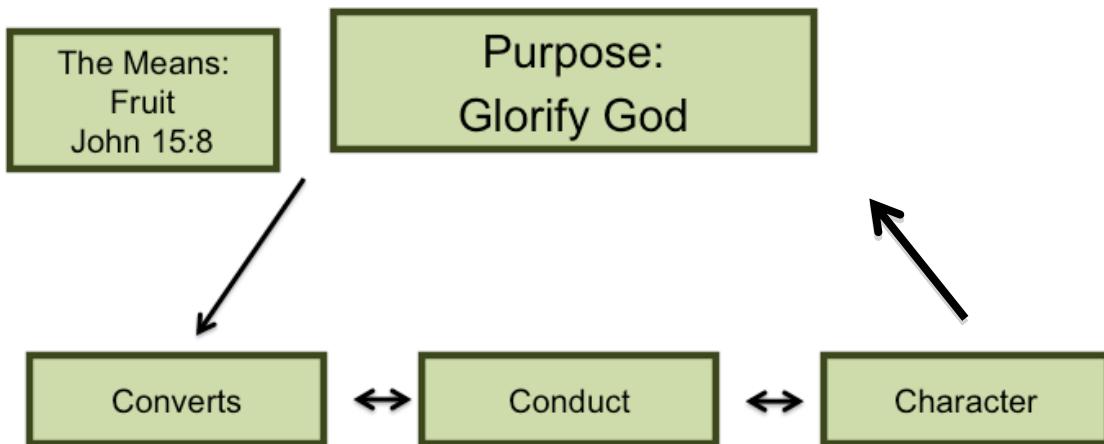
II. The Means of Growth: DISCIPLESHP (Ephesians 4:12a)

- A. EQUIPPING the Saints- for the work of the ministry
- B. EDIFYING the body for the building of the believer (Acts 20:32)

III. The Goal of Growth: MATURITY

- A. UNITY reach unity in the Faith
- B. KNOWLEDGE of the Son- and in the knowledge of the Son of God (Philippians 3:10; II Peter 1:8)

KEEPING GOD'S GLORY PRIMARY



When “Converts” is the goal...

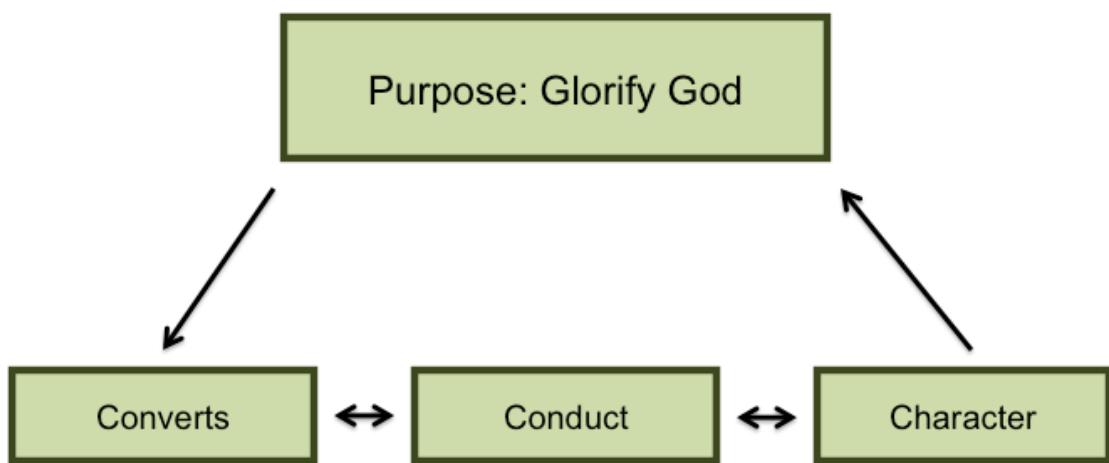
- Pragmatism
- Lacks objective look at the Word
- Unreasonable attacks on some theological positions

When “Conduct” is the goal...

- Pride in knowledge
- External equals holiness
- Lacks objective look at the Word
- Man-focused view of holiness

When “Character” is the goal...

- Overlooks other means of God’s Glory
- Sees policies as unnecessary or hindering



ATTRACTION AND ATTACHMENT: AVOIDING PRAGMATISM

Avoiding Pragmatism

Attraction

Attraction to a Leader

Magnifies the Person

Breadth

Attachment

Attachment to a Principle

Magnifies the Lord

Depth

Avoiding Pragmatism

Attraction

Goal = Production

Method = Promotion

Means = Deceit

Attachment

Goal = People

Method = Feed

Means = Lead

Avoiding Pragmatism

Attraction

Result = Frustration

Product =
Wood, Hay, and
Stubble

Attachment

Result = rejoicing

Product =
Gold, Silver, and
Precious Stone

Three questions to consider...

1. Do you think that blogging has done much damage to the body of Christ?
2. Do you think that the Spirit of God has been grieved and quenched by attitudes that have been dishonoring to God and disobedient to Scripture (Ephesians 4:29-32)?
3. Do we need revival so that we can be the salt and the light that this decaying, dark world needs?

MAINTAINING A BALANCE

I. Monitoring the spiritual gauge

A. To stay near full requires spiritual disciplines:

1. Solitude
2. Sacrifice
3. Scripture
4. Supplication

B. Stephen Olford suggests 6 steps for devotions:

1. Wait
2. Read
3. Think
4. Write
5. Pray
6. Share

II. Monitoring the physical gauge

- A. God's Temple (I Cor. 6:19)
- B. God's Tool (Rom. 6:13)
- C. Temporal (II Cor. 4:18; I Tim. 4:8)
- D. God's Trophy (Gen. 2:7)
- E. God's Treasure House (I Cor. 4:7)

III. Monitoring the emotional gauge

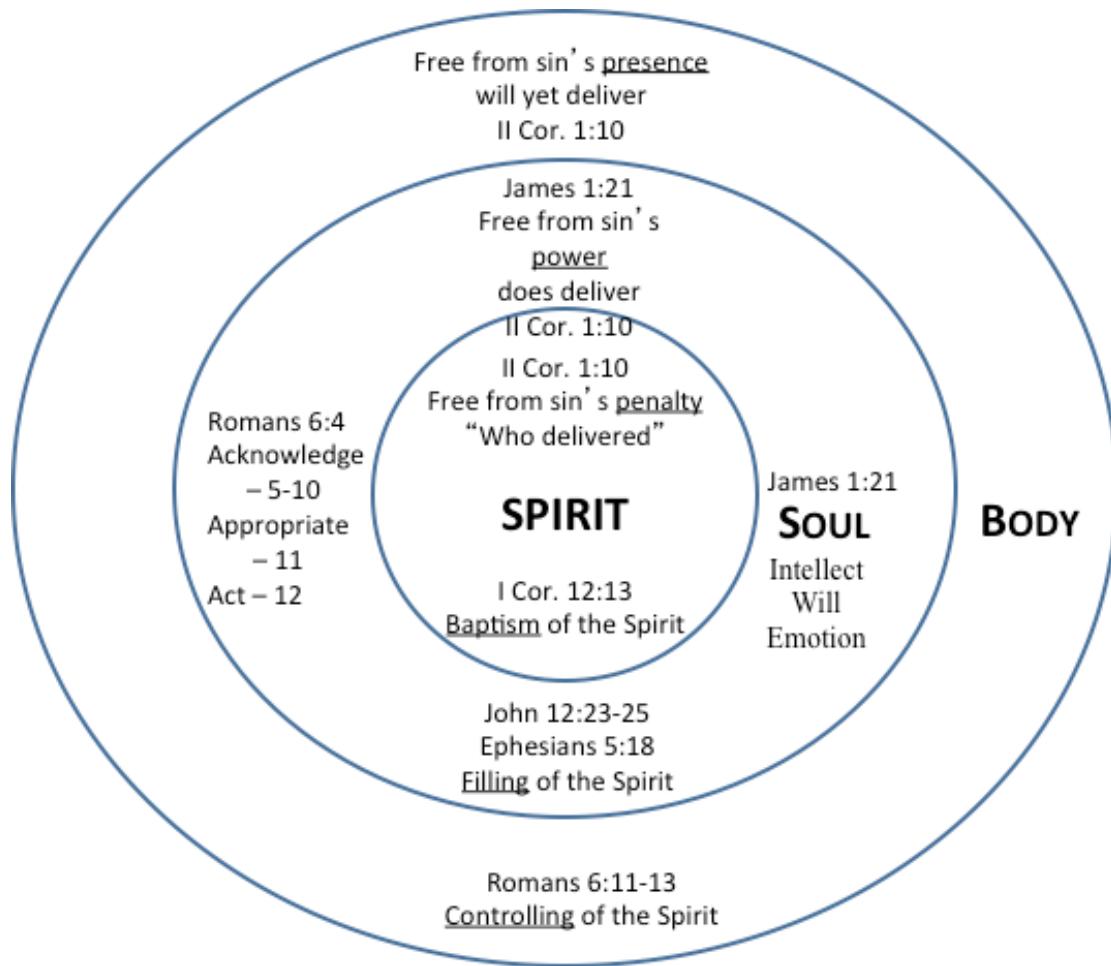
A. Signs the emotional gauge is low:

1. Begin to feel weak morally
2. Begin to get short and irritable with people
3. Begin to feel a desire to get out of God's work

B. Recharging a drained emotional battery takes at least three steps:

1. It requires time
2. What you have to do, do it with all your heart
3. Balance the eternal with the practical

BROKENESS



The shattering of my will so that every response is controlled by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The on-going process of sanctification. I Thessalonians 5:23

Progressive Sanctification is Warfare

- II Corinthians 10:3
- I Timothy 1:18
- II Timothy 2:4
- James 4:1
- I Peter 2:11

Progressive Sanctification is Warfare

Sinful Nature – complex of human attributes that demonstrate a desire and a predisposition to sin.

RECLAIMING AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY
11th Annual Central Africa Baptist Leadership Conference

New Nature – complex of divine attributes that demonstrate a desire and predisposition to righteousness.

Purpose

- To bring to usefulness and shape us into the image of Christ
- To keep me from reacting on the basis of five senses
- To glorify God by reflecting the fruit of the Spirit

I. Divinely Planned – Our Sanctification – Heb. 12:14

God is interested in what we are becoming.

Example:

the Apostle Peter:	God proved him:
Example of Strength	Weak
Example of Loyalty	Disloyal
Example of Faithfulness	Failure
Example of Courage	Cowardly
Example of Service	Offense

I. Divinely Planned – Our Sanctification – Heb. 12:14

- God will zero in on our strengths, which make us self-dependent, to turn us to dependence on Him so He can show His strength through us – II Cor. 12:6-10. Peter did not understand from his spirit because he was controlled by his soulish thinking.
- God had a divine plan for Peter, but Peter had to be broken.

II. Perpetual – Our Stubbornness

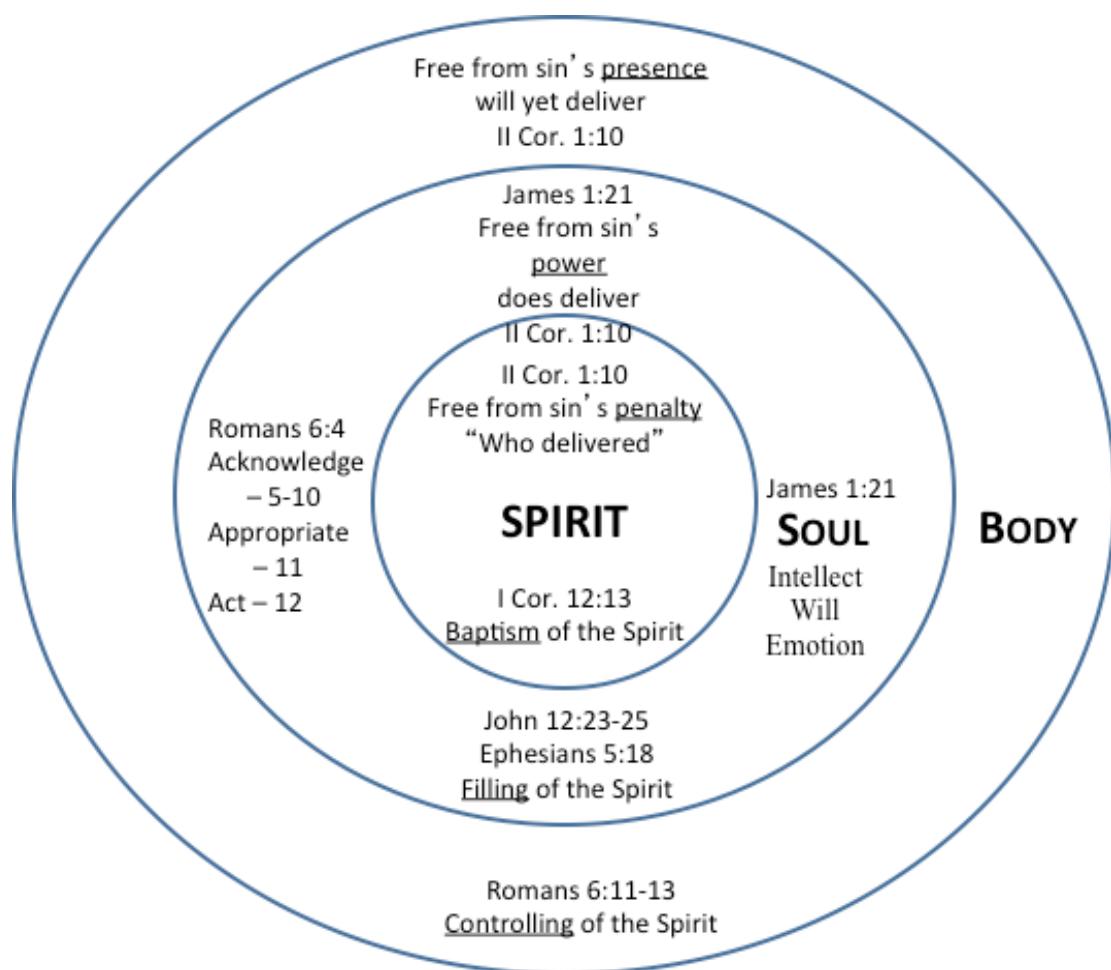
- Peter stepped into the water in the Spirit (belief) and became soulish (fear).
- How many times should I forgive? 7 times?
- I know not the man – denial
- Peter, your love for me is lacking –
- You can't rush God's breaking, but you can prolong it.
- God will get all the way to the core of self (pride). God kept working on the determined, resourceful Peter until he saw himself as God saw him. He reached the I AM level.

III. Painful

- Instrument
- Cost
- Deals with the real you
- Health – idolatry, god shelf
- Fears reveal your gods
- Business loss – ministry setbacks
- Word of God – Heb. 4:12 – two-edged sword
- Holy Spirit conviction – Quench/Grieve

IV. Profitable – Fruit Sanctification – Heb. 12:1-14

- Despise – v 5 – regard lightly
- Faint – v 5
- Endure – v 7 – reminder of our Sonship
 - Our good – v 10
 - Share His holiness – v 10
 - Peaceable fruit of righteousness – v 11
 - Sanctification – v 14



LIVING TO BE PLEASING TO HIM

II Corinthians 5:9-21

I. Paul's Motive – II Cor 5:10-11

A. Realization of Accountability at the Bema – II Cor 5:10

1. Time of Revelation – I Corinthians 3:13

Three tests:

a. By Attitude – I Corinthians 9:16-18

b. By Authority – II Timothy 2:5

c. By Ability – Romans 12:3; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27

2. Time of Reward – I Corinthians 3:14

II Corinthians 5:10

II John 8

II Peter 1:11

Revelation 22:12

3. Time of Regret – I Corinthians 3:15

II John 8

B. The Fear of the Lord – II Cor 5:11

Three faces of fear – Deut 5:29

- Awesome of Character
- Obedience of Commands
- Realization of Consequences

C. Love of Christ – II Cor 5:14

II. Paul's Ministry – II Cor 5:18-21

Reconciliation

- God is the author – of God (v. 18)
- Christ is the agent – by Jesus Christ (v. 18)
- We are ambassadors – (v. 19-20)

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- A. Propitiation – altar
Ceremonial – God – author
 - B. Redemption – marketplace
Commercial – Christ – agent
 - C. Justification – court
Judicial – Us – ambassadors
 - D. Reconciliation – family
Personal – adopted
- III. Paul's Mindset – II Cor 5:15
- A. Christ-centered not self-centered (5:15)
 - B. Inward not outward (II Cor 4:16-17)
 - C. Eternal not temporal (II Cor 4:18)