

II PETER

- I. His Divine power has granted us everything necessary for life and godliness. Therefore, pursue godly qualities and behaviors.
 - A. II 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.
 - B. Pray
- II. Summary of teaching's past - Since God has done all that, you do this.
 - A. In verses 2-4, Peter reminds us of God's great and varied provisions which make it possible for us to live the Christian life.
 - B. Then, in verses 5-7, Peter presents us with a list of steps we can take in response to all that God has done for us – and these steps take us from new born babes in Christ to full grown, mature Christians.
 - C. Finally, and this is what we are going to begin looking at today, in verses 8-11, Peter tells us why it is wise to use these steps and why it is foolish to ignore them or treat them as if they are of little importance.
 - D. However, before jumping onto verse 8, I want to raise two questions: "Why a plan?" and "Why steps?"
- III. Two questions about growing in Godliness
 - A. Why a plan? Why do we need a plan for growing in godliness? Because godliness is not inherent to our nature, and pursuing growth in godliness does not happen spontaneously. To grow in Christ-likeness, to become holy in all your behavior, to go from needing milk to eating meat requires getting personally and purposefully involved. And for that, you need a plan. And of course, once you have a plan, you must work your plan.

1. A plan is an organized method or a set of predetermined steps for accomplishing a goal or for getting from one place to another. Therefore, if the plan is good, then following it will lead to the accomplishment of your goal or the arrival at your destination.
2. If the plan is not good, then following it will lead to frustration and disappointment. But it will also reveal the need to adjust your plan or make a new one so you can get to where you want to go.
 - a. Therefore, a weak or insufficient plan is better than no plan, for it will at least get you started down the path, even if it only gets you far enough to realize you need a better plan to complete your journey.
 - b. However, without a plan your goal will remain an unfulfilled wish.
 - c. And without the willingness to modify a poor plan or replace a bad one, an ineffective plan will ultimately impede or even prevent you from arriving at your desired destination.
3. In applying these truths about plans to Peter's steps in verses 5-7, there are two things I want to make clear.
 - a. First, Peter's steps are a plan that we can follow from the first glimmers of faith to living a life filled and controlled by godly love.
 - (1) Failure to follow Peter's plan, or some process similar to Peter's steps, will result in the failure to acquire these seven godly qualities. The failure to acquire these seven qualities will keep you in a spiritually weak condition, which in turn will decrease what glory you are able to bring to God's name.
 - (2) But at the same time, the failure to acquire these seven qualities will keep you from loving others as you ought.
 - (3) My point here is that Peter's steps are God's prescribed plan for becoming holy in all your behavior – just as God is holy. You cannot ignore or get lazy in regard to God's plan and end up at God's chosen destination.
 - b. Second, though Peter's steps present you with a planned approach to growing in godliness, you will need an additional plan on how to make measured and commendable progress in adding these seven qualities to your faith.
 - (1) In other words, you need a daily plan that will set the course for what you will do each day in relation to working your way through the process of adding these seven qualities.
 - (2) For example: What scriptures will you memorize, ponder, and apply at this point in the process? How often will you pray, and what will you ask God for? What will you do to con-

sciously nurture a sense of God's presence and participation as you travel this path? How will you prepare each morning to meet the day, defeat the foe, cling to righteousness, and continue growing in these seven virtues? How will you handle failure and what will you do to get back on track? Who will you partner with, or who will hold you accountable on this journey?

- (3) Without a plan that pulls together the things that I just mentioned so that you know what to do day in and day out, you may make progress for a while, but it won't be long before you are neglecting or forgetting to do some of the things so vital to making progress. And then the day will come when you are not doing any specific and intentional things in relation to these seven qualities, because you have gotten so involved in temporal things.
 4. My point here is that following Peter's steps is vital to Christian growth. But equally vital is a specific plan on what you will do each day to sequentially add these virtues to your faith. So I urge you, make a plan for following Peter's plan and then work your plan.
- B. Why steps? Why do we need steps for growing in godliness? Because we cannot change everything all at once. The reality is, an all at once total transformation is not only impossible, humanly speaking, it is unwise, spiritually speaking.
1. This principle was first brought to light when God told Israel that they were not going to take the Promised Land all at once, because that would be impossible, humanly speaking. God also said that even if He miraculously gave them the land all at once, they would not be strong enough or numerous enough to spread out far enough to defend it from outside enemies or protect it from the wild beasts and vegetation that, if left unchecked, would make it uninhabitable.
 2. Now, just as this principle was true for Israel in the physical realm, so it is true for us in the spiritual realm. All at once total spiritual transformation is not only impossible, humanly speaking, it is unwise, spiritually speaking.
 3. Returning to the physical realm for an example of this, we know that physical strength comes from repeated and progressive physical exercise. For example, no man can lift his body weight over his head

- without exercising in ways that progressively build his strength until he is strong enough to do so.
4. In the same way, no Christian is spiritually strong enough to exercise self-control in ALL things or love as God loves in the first months after being born again. Such extensive self-control and such high quality, self-denying love requires a level of spiritual strength that is only acquired through repeated and progressive spiritual exercise. And should God miraculously give us all seven qualities upon being born again, who of us would have the spiritual strength or wisdom or experience with fighting off temptation or perseverance necessary to hold that much ground from that day forward?
 5. My point here is that things like spiritual strength, vigilance, a healthy prayer life, godly attitudes, perseverance, and a proper handling of failure – which are so necessary to adding and maintaining the virtues on Peter's list, are not attained in a moment or in a day, but over a period of months and years.
 - a. We cannot progress from new believer faith to loving God supremely in a moment of time. We must work our way there, step by step, day by day, and year by year.
 - b. And that is not a bad thing. In fact, it is good, for it is the way God created us – as affirmed by the fact that it is God who has given us this step-by-step plan of progression here in II Peter.
 6. Therefore, plans and steps are our friends. When coupled with God's gracious provisions, promises, and empowerment, they are our hope of arrival at the desired destination. And so we are wise to use them as gifts from God, for when we do, we not only gain the spiritual heights that God calls us to attain, but are able to hold the ground gained throughout our lifetime.

IV. The importance of growing in godliness

- A. II Peter 1:8 . . . 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.
 1. The first thing I want to point out about verse 8 is that there is a conditional if that must be satisfied if we are to become useful and fruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And there are two parts to this conditional if for being useful and fruitful.
 - a. The first part is that of actively pursuing these seven character qualities so that they progressively become a functioning, influential, and transforming part of our life.

- b. The second part of the condition is not only to keep them alive and active, but to keep learning and maturing in relation to these qualities so their influence and transforming work grows greater and greater, and spreads to more and more areas of life.
2. The second thing I want to point out about verse 8 is that there is a principle at work here, and this principle is two sided. The essence of this principle is this: Growth leads to further growth, lack of growth leads to loss.
- a. In other words, the further you go in nurturing and maturing these qualities, the further you will be able to go. The more you grow in being useful and fruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, the more you will be able to grow in usefulness and fruitfulness.
 - b. But the other side is also true: if you do not keep the growth going, you will not only stop growing, you will become stagnant, and in your state of stagnation, you will begin to lose what growth you attained and revert to old ways.
 - c. The point is, sufficient growth leads to more growth, and an increase in strength makes it possible to get stronger. But an insufficient effort or laziness or contentment with how far you have grown leads to stagnation, and stagnation leads to an increasingly weakened condition until what you have gained dissipates to nothing.
 - d. The truth of this two sided principle is stated by Jesus in Matthew 13:12 . . . For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.
3. The third thing I want to point out about verse 8 is that whatever knowledge we have of our Lord Jesus is only true or effective or useful if it results in a changed life.
- a. You can know theology inside and out. You can be an advanced student of the holy scriptures. You can know all there is to know about the times and life Jesus Christ. But if your knowledge does not change your life, if it does not result in a growing godliness, if it does not take you to Christian maturity, then the reality is, you do not know the Lord Jesus, himself.
 - b. Now should you be thinking I am just making this up, let me point you to two scriptures. Jesus said: "This is eternal life, that you may [experientially and personally] know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent" (John 17:3).

- c. And the apostle John clearly affirms this truth when he said: “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected” (I John 2:3-5).
- d. Interestingly, as our true knowledge of Jesus transforms us, that transformation, by its very nature, completes the circle by bringing about an increasingly accurate, and deepening, and intimate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- e. The point here is simply this: the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is a transforming knowledge, and the further you travel down the path of spiritual growth, the more of Jesus, himself, you come to know. So pursue, add in, and strengthen these seven qualities, for this brings great reward.

- B. II Peter 1:9 . . . For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.
1. The main point here is that our failure to pursue, to lay hold of, and to continue nurturing these seven qualities has specific destructive consequences. And whether you can see these consequences, based on your own spiritual condition and the condition of the Christians you surround yourself with, they are, nevertheless, very real and very destructive.
 2. Peter says the consequences are blindness or short-sightedness. And we are right to assume he is talking about spiritual blindness and short-sightedness.
 3. Blindness is the inability to see anything at all. In other words, when you are spiritually blind, you cannot see where you have been, what you were like and what God has saved you from, where you are now and how you got here, or where you are going and how you will get there.
 - a. You cannot see truth from error, or light from darkness.
 - b. You cannot see the powerful hold sin had over you or the hold some sin still has over you.
 - c. You cannot see the true nature of your choices and behavior, and your blindness prevents you from evaluating your choices and behavior against the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
 - d. The point here is that losing spiritual sight so as to be spiritually blind is a loss no Christian can afford.

4. To be short-sighted is to see only what is at hand or what is happening at the moment, while failing to see what is coming as a result of what you are doing now.
 - a. For example, in the human realm, the short-sighted person sees only the pleasure or comfort of eating while being blind to the weight gain that comes from overeating and the difficulty of losing weight once it is gained.
 - b. In the spiritual realm, the short-sighted person sees only the personal benefit that comes from stealing or lying or laying up treasures on earth while being blind to the destructive consequences that are sure to come as a result of such sinful and selfish behavior.
 - c. Paul exhorts us to beware of this short-sighted view when he says: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7-8).
5. The point here is that a failure on our part to add these godly qualities to our faith is not a simple oversight or a small matter of minor concern, but a serious matter that will cost us dearly, in this life and in the next.

V. Conclusion

- A. When we add these seven qualities to our faith, we become useful and fruitful Christians.
- B. When we fail to add these seven qualities, or when we grow lazy and add just a few or give up before the job is done, we not only become useless and unfruitful, we also become blind or short-sighted – which makes it that much harder to come to our senses and give an honest effort to adding these seven godly qualities.
- C. At the end of His sermon on the mount, Jesus tells a story that ought to capture our attention in relation to today’s teaching. Jesus said that “everyone who hears these words of [His] and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of [His] and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24-27).