

**THE
CHRISTIAN
GRACES**

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PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE (1)

The requisites for the development of Christian personality are presented in the first chapter of second Peter. Commonly called the Christian graces, they are virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. The study before us pertains to these graces. In order to understand their relationship to Christian personality, it is necessary that we give due attention and consideration to the context in which they are presented.

The plain and emphatic thesis of the divine word is that the Christian graces can become part of a human life only as that life is related to the power and nature of God in Christ. "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust" (verses 3,4).

Deliverance from Sin

We notice the contrast drawn between "the corruption that is in the world by lust" and "the divine nature." In effect, the inspired writer affirms that only those who have escaped from the world of sin, of moral and spiritual corruption, become partakers of the divine nature. They are the souls that have been "delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Colossians 1:13). The honored, elevated position they occupy in partaking of the divine nature, in the enjoyment of life and godliness, is theirs because they have accepted Jesus Christ as their spiritual Saviour and Emancipator. By their submissive, reliant faith in Him they have become children of the living God. See Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26,27. Thus we understand that when the apostle Peter exhorts Christians to supply in their faith the graces of Christian living, he does so on the grounds that they have been saved by Christ and are children of the heavenly Father.

It is after a person has accepted Christ as his Saviour, and only then, that God appeals to him in the matter of how his earthly life should be lived. Christian personality is not the cause of man's pardon in Christ, of his deliverance from the world of sin, but the *result* of it. The word of God instructs us that "being delivered out of the hands of our enemies we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke 1:74,75).

Such passages as the following are further scriptural affirmation of the holy life that it is to be the response to man's salvation in Christ: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are

his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). ". . . the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13,14). See Titus 3:7,8.

In light of these and many other passages it is evident that the sinner's legal position of being under the condemnation of sin must first be rectified before his moral position can be touched. The judicial must precede the moral. The divine order is first pardon, then holiness; first reconciliation to God, then conformity to His image and will. For only when one has been brought back into the favor of God by the pardoning power of Christ, surrendering his life to God, can his personality be molded and made after the divine will.

Looking again at the first chapter of second Peter, we notice the writer's assertion that those who are privileged to receive "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" have been "called by his own glory and virtue" (verse 3). Such who have been called by the pristine glory and virtue of the Saviour have obviously received the forgiveness of sins. They have obtained with the apostles "a like precious faith . . . in the righteousness of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ" (verse 1).

The Divine Promises

It is further affirmed that those who enjoy the great spiritual blessings of Christ do so on the basis of being granted "his precious and exceeding great promises" (verse 4). That the ones here designated are Christians, those who have been called out of spiritual darkness to be children of God and to walk in the life of holiness, is confirmed by 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1, ". . . for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. *Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*"

The Nature of Man

It is only as we understand the spiritual nature of man that we are able to understand what it means to partake of the divine nature. Man is similar to the animal in that he has a body of flesh composed of the same physical elements as found in the animal kingdom. But here the resemblance ends. Unlike the animal, man has a spiritual being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26; John 4:24). It is this spiritual nature of man, his likeness to God, that has the capacity and ability to partake of the divine nature.

The conflict between the two natures of man is one of the most apparent and vexatious realities of life. It has been said that "the difficulty is not that we are a higher hog and human soul, but that we are both at one and the same time." The hog-side of us loves the filth of the mudhole and would leave us there. But the soul-side of us has the capacity to answer the call of the Eternal and is inclined away from the mudhole.

In sin man has separated himself from God. Instead of partaking of the divine nature, he partakes of the animal nature, enslaving his spirit to the carnal inclinations of the flesh rather than to the righteousness of God. His spiritual nature has been conquered by his animal nature so that his thoughts and actions are carnal rather than spiritual.

This is changed, however, when he surrenders himself to Christ at the cross. For at Calvary his sins are forgiven and his carnal nature is brought into subjection to his spiritual nature. He is now under the control of the divine Spirit. "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk" (Galatians 5:24,25). See Matthew 26:41; Romans 6:6; 8:1-17; Galatians 6:7,8.

Fellowship with Jesus Christ

As we further pursue our investigation of what it means to "become partakers of the divine nature," in connection with the responsibility of the child of God to supply in his faith the Christian graces, it is important that we consider the meaning of the word "partaker," from the Greek *koinonos*, meaning "a partaker, a sharer" (Thayer). Closely associated in meaning with this word is *koinonia*, defined by Thayer as "fellowship, association, communion." One then who is a partaker (*koinonos*) of the divine nature is one who has fellowship, association, or communion (*koinonia*) with the divine nature, the nature of God.

Since in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full" (Colossians 2:9,10), it is therefore in and through Him that we have fellowship, association, or communion with the divine nature. "For we are become partakers of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14). "God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). See 1 John 1:3-7.

Life in Jesus Christ

To partake of the divine nature is to have fellowship with the divine life. *Life in Jesus Christ!* That is the great and wonderful reality which is the very core of this series of lessons on Christian personality. For the basic goal of one who has crucified the flesh at Calvary is to reproduce in his life the life of Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). "For ye

died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Colossians 3:3,4). "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). See Romans 8:10; 1 John 2:24; Revelation 3:20.

The foregoing passages teach that the meaning of genuine conversion to Christ is that of the substitution of the self-life for the Christ-life. Before conversion it is *self*; after conversion it is *Christ*. Before conversion it is walking after the *flesh*; after conversion it is walking after the *Spirit*. See Romans 8:1-5; Galatians 5:16-24.

The Christian, having put Christ on in baptism, expressive of trusting faith in Him, has united himself with Christ to receive the marvelous new life in Him, in contrast to the old life of sin. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life . . . Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:4,11).

Even though many claimant Christians diligently strive for soundness in doctrine, how tragically they fail to embrace Christianity as a way of life—not merely as a creed, a philosophy, or a theory of action—but as *life* in the Son of God. Real life! Complete life! Sublime life! Joyous life! He who has called us out of darkness into light, out of death into life, declared, "The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

In the final analysis, what Christ really means to an individual is determined by what He does to that person's life. A religion that is incapable of reaching into a human life to transform, elevate, and enoble it, is utterly foreign to the religion of Christ. Only as men truly embrace Christ as the alpha and omega of their earthly existence will they develop the kind of personality that glorifies God.

How sad it is that so many who piously claim to be true disciples of Christ are actually fearful of life. So they throttle life, inhibit it, dull it, anything, in short, but let it run vibrant, free, and glowing in the living Christ. They may think of themselves as loyal Christians because they regularly attend religious services and go through the motions of worship. But to them such activities are a hollow and meaningless substitute for Christian living rather than the means of stimulating it.

Fundamentally, the fear of life that haunts so many nominal Christians is due to a basic cause: the refusal, deliberate or inadvertent, to accept

life in the Son of God as a high-spirited, courageous adventure in the name of Him who died for them and for the sake of their real and best interests. The heart of the matter is either that the Christian regards life as a sublime, challenging adventure, and so is completely alive while he is living, or that he refuses to accept life in this spirit, and so dies before he is officially declared dead. The option stands plainly before him, and he can choose the way his earthly existence shall be lived. He can really *live* while he is living or he can just as certainly *die* before he dies.

Indeed, how sad it is that so many who lay claim to life in the Son never really enjoy the abundance of life to be found in Him.

The life imparted to the Christian at the time of his surrender to Christ at the cross is that of eternal existence with Him, which has its beginning in this present world. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life" (John 6:47). Cf. John 5:24.

A Life of Holiness

The essence or substance of eternal life with Christ is reproduced in the life of the Christian as he partakes of the spiritual and moral attributes of Christ. For the nature of the eternal Christ, even as of the heavenly Father, is that of holiness. "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). To have fellowship with Christ is to participate, partake of, or have communion with His holiness. "And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:24). "But like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15,16). See Ephesians 1:4; Romans 12:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 12:10; 2 Peter 3:11.

The word "holy" is translated from the Greek *hagios*, defined by Thayer as "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his . . . in a moral sense, *pure, sinless, upright.*" This is the same Greek word rendered as "saint" in the New Testament to designate the children of God (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; etc.).

As the pure, righteous God is separate from the world of moral and spiritual corruption, so also essentially is the faithful Christian. "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Peter affirms that only "through the *knowledge* of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (verse 3) can the Christian live a life of holiness. And the only authentic knowledge concerning Christ is revealed in His holy word. Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John 6:63). In John 17:17 the Master expressly

affirms that sanctification, or holiness, is made possible by the divine word: "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth." Jesus Himself is the *truth*, the eternal Word (John 1:1-3; 14:6), but the revelation concerning Him and His will is found in the sacred scriptures.

Questions

1. Why is the development of Christian personality the result of pardon in Christ rather than the cause of it?
2. Discuss the dual nature of man.
3. Discuss the concept of "becoming partakers of the divine nature" as having *fellowship* with Christ.
4. What is to be the basic goal of one who has crucified the flesh at Calvary? What is meant by the affirmation that life in Christ is the substitution of the Christ-life for the self-life?
5. Why do many claimant Christians fail to enjoy abundance of life in Christ?
6. Discuss the nature of Deity as holiness and the necessity of this all-encompassing divine attribute being found in the Christian.
7. What is the sole source of the Christian's knowledge of the holiness of God in Christ?
8. You are urged to reverently and prayerfully consider and answer the following personal questions in the light of this lesson: Do you truly enjoy abundance of life in Christ? Have you truly crucified self at the cross? Are you truly reproducing the life of Christ in your life? Are you truly becoming holy as God is holy?

PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE (2)

Does the Christian reproduce in his life the life of Jesus merely because he spasmodically reads the Bible, boasts of his loyalty to it, and obeys as little of it as he can to ease his conscience? To some this may seem a needless question. But when we consider the widespread dearth of true spirituality in the church, we would justifiably conclude that the avowal so many church members make concerning their loyalty to the Bible has never been translated into loyalty to the *Christ* of the Bible. Such people are, in fact, guilty of idolatry in the form of Bible worship, or Bibliolatry. The Bible is a sort of talisman to them, a magical charm, a rabbit's foot, to protect them from evil and to make them acceptable to God. The formula they would tacitly avow for spiritual success is all too simple: just perfunctorily read the Bible, mouth your loyalty to it, coldly and legalistically follow its least demanding requirements, and all will be well with your soul. Even the term "thus saith the Lord," which of itself can express a valid scriptural concept, is used by the Bibliolater as a legalistic shibboleth rather than as an expression of genuine commitment to Christ.

The *words* of the word of God are useful to the Christian only as the spiritual concepts they convey to his understanding become identified with his spiritual being, only as they are translated into his life. Any idea that the mere learning and quoting of scriptures make one acceptable to God and drive away the devil is childishly naive, to say the least. It foolishly assumes that the efficacy is in the *words* themselves rather than in the spiritual realities they represent. When Jesus said, "It is written," quoting scripture to the devil (Matthew 4:1-10), the power He had against temptation and to stand for the right was not just His academic understanding and verbal use of divinely revealed words, but His personal identification with their meaning, the translation of their meaning into His life. For example, He quoted certain scriptural words to the devil concerning the necessity of living by the Father's will and worshipping Him, but these words were efficacious to Him because His whole life was lived in the Father's presence, in submission to the Father's will, and in partaking of the Father's holiness.

In studying the New Testament, we learn that the sacred scriptures make possible the reproduction of the life of Jesus in the life of the Christian by revealing to him the *precepts* of Christ, the *example* of Christ, and the *presence* of Christ. When these inseparable phrases of divine revelation become identified with the Christian's spiritual being, the life of Christ has been reproduced in his life and he has become a partaker of the divine nature.

Precepts of Christ

The word "precept" is defined by Webster as "any commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule of action; but applied particularly to commands respecting moral conduct." Jesus Christ is the supreme authority in matters pertaining to moral conduct (Matthew 28:18). In His revelation to us He has laid down various and sundry commands respecting our conduct as His disciples. And whatever He reveals for us to think, to be, to say, and to do, is involved in our conduct as Christians. The graces of virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, the study of which is the principal reason for this series of lessons, are but rules of conduct set forth for the Christian by the authority of Christ through the apostle Peter.

Time and time again the divine word stresses the necessity of God's children obeying His will. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves" (James 1:22).

For Christians to live as they ought, thus to reproduce the life of Christ in their lives, it is necessary that they be *informed* as to what God requires of them. There can be no *doing* of God's will without *knowing* His will. "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9,10). Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

The fundamental question the loyal Christian seeks to answer as he studies the word of God is: What does Christ want me to think, to be, to say, and to do in conducting my life in this present world?

Example of Christ

In reproducing the life of Christ in our lives, we need more than the inspired pronouncements of moral truth, however significant and well-defined they may be. We need *showing* as well as *telling* the way of moral goodness. God sent His Son into the world to *show* us as well as to *tell* us how to live. His perfect life eloquently declares that the moral and spiritual precepts of His word are not just theoretical but entirely workable and practical. "Him who knew no sin . . ." (2 Corinthians 5:21). "In him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).

Were the Lord's earthly existence removed from all stress and strain, from all temptation, then He could not have been our example in holy living. But His earthly life was lived in a body of flesh, subjected to all the temptations and trials that beset mankind. ". . . Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-7). "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . ." (John 1:14). "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). See 1 Timothy 3:16.

In order to reproduce Christ's life in our lives we must be as familiar with His earthly life as with the precepts of His word. In Him we can see the workability in human life of virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, for all these graces were found complete and entire in the earthly, fleshly existence of Him who was the perfect Son of man.

One of the causes of the dearth of spirituality in the lives of so many nominal Christians is that although they are familiar with the commands of Christ, His moral and spiritual precepts, they are not familiar with the Christ who gives these commands. Thus they are without any real challenge or inspiration to live for God. Certainly, they need to know the *precepts* of Christ, but more than this they need to be inspired and challenged to obey these precepts by the perfect life of Christ. More than becoming enthusiastic about His precepts, they need also to become enthusiastic about His life.

Lawrence of Arabia said that "no man would lead the Arabs except he ate the rank's food, wore their clothes, lived level with them, and yet appeared better in himself." Such a leader is Christ. He takes His place alongside the Christian, having met everything the Christian meets, having had no power for His moral victory that is not at our disposal, having faced life as the Son of man, and having carried within Himself a character unstained and unblemished by sin. In His perfection lies our hope for an increasingly higher level of moral and spiritual living. For when we see ourselves for what we are in comparison with what He is, we will never be complacent in our imperfection, but will be challenged to higher things in the building of Christian personality.

He who goes to the New Testament to learn only the *rules* of living will never reproduce the life of Jesus in his life. Unless his knowledge of these rules is reinforced by the inspiration, challenge, and example of *the Life*, he will be unable to develop Christian personality. By all means, Christ pleads with us to do as He says (Luke 6:46); but more, He pleads, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). If we would be Christlike in personality, we must indeed follow Him, imitating His example in spiritual and moral living. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as

in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:21,22).

Concerning the importance of the example of Christ, Henry Liddon said, "Man is an artist. And as an artist he needs not merely the material out of which to mold some expression of thought, but an example, and ideal to copy. It may indeed be asked whether it will not do as well to obey a precept as to copy an example. Example, it is said, is vague; precept is explicit. Precept is active; it seeks you out and addresses you. Example is passive; it lets you imitate if you will. Example merely says, 'This may be done because it has been done.' Precept says, 'Do it.' No, you especially who, as parents or masters, are responsible for influence on others; assuredly, no. Example goes further than precept. Precept leads us to the foot of a precipitous mountain, and it cries, 'Scale that height.' But example whispers: 'Mark what I do, and then do it; it cannot be hard for you since it is easy for me. Look how I step over that crevice, and rest on this projecting foothold, and tread lightly and quickly along that insecure bit of path. Watch me; keep close to me. Then all will be well in the end.' We do need an example, and the Lord has satisfied this need of our nature, and completely."

Presence of Christ

In reproducing the life of Christ in the life of a Christian, the Lord's presence is just as significant as His precepts and example. The Christian is not left alone to his own devices in living for Christ. Building a Christlike personality is not merely the mainstrenth and awkwardness of a human being relying on his own strength alone. A significant truth we have tended to overlook in the church, which has left the lives of so many Christians spiritually impoverished and destitute, is that God's children must constantly have the divine presence in their lives in order for them to apply the precepts and to follow the example of Christ. In our teaching we have greatly stressed the command, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), but we have been prone to ignore the next verse: "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." To deny the presence of God in our lives is to court spiritual disaster. We cannot work *out* the salvation we have received from Christ without the power of God's presence working *in* us.

Prayerless, thus spiritually powerless, lives are the inevitable result of holding to the false concept that Christian living involves just the Chris-

tian and the Bible, with God removed from the picture. If Christian living is limited to the Christian reading the Bible, applying its principles in his life, and following the example of Jesus—all done by his own power alone—why then should he pray at all? Prayer properly assumes that man is weak and God is strong, and that without the presence and power of God working in the Christian there can be no real growth in Christian personality. *Christian lives are Christ empowered lives because they are prayerful lives, dependent on the presence of God in Christ.*

The necessity of the Lord's presence with the Christian in producing fruitful Christian living is affirmed in the following passages: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5); "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20); "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). See 1 Corinthians 10:13; 15:57; Ephesians 1:19,20; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 13:5. Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:8; Hebrews 4:16; 12:28; James 4:6.

It is through the Holy Spirit that Christ dwells in the Christian. "And hereby we know that he [Christ] abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us" (1 John 3:24). ". . . that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Ephesians 3:16). See also Acts 2:38; Romans 8:5-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13,14.

The Christian not only needs the information the Holy Spirit gives him concerning the precepts and example of Christ, which He has revealed in the inspired word (John 15:26; 16:13; Revelation 2:7; etc.), but also the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to incorporate this information in his life. As a requisite for partaking of the divine nature, thus to develop Christian personality, *the personal presence* of the Spirit is as important as the *revelation* of the Spirit.

Conclusion

In the riches of the grace of God is to be found everything the Christian needs to partake of the divine nature, to reproduce the life of Christ in his life, to develop Christian personality: *the precepts of Christ, the example of Christ, and the presence of Christ.* With the passing of each precious moment of life it should be the earnest desire and prayer of every Christian to enjoy an increasingly greater measure of the unsearchable riches of God's matchless grace.

Questions

1. How can one be guilty of the sin of Bibliolatry?
2. Discuss the truism that the words of the word of God have no useful significance to the Christian except as the spiritual concepts they convey to his understanding become identified with his spiritual being, except as they are translated into his life.
3. What is a precept? What is the importance of the precepts of Christ in the development of Christian personality, in the reproducing of Christ's life in our lives?
4. Discuss the importance of *knowing* God's will as a prerequisite for *doing* His will.
5. Why do we need *showing* as well as *telling* the way of moral goodness?
6. What kind of a leader is Christ?
7. Why do we need Christ's presence as well as His precepts and example in our lives?
8. Discuss how a prayerless life is the inevitable result of trying to develop Christian personality in reliance on one's strength alone.
9. Why is the personal presence of the Spirit as important as the revelation of the Spirit?
10. Are you imbibing the precepts and example of Christ in your life through the power of the indwelling Spirit? Are you unceasingly praying that you will reproduce Christ's life in your life, that you will incorporate in your personality the graces of virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love? Are you truly a partaker of the divine nature?

ADDING ALL DILIGENCE

In the first chapter of second Peter, as we discussed in the first two lessons of this study, the writer sets forth the great blessings God gives His children through Jesus Christ, blessings involved in becoming "partakers of the divine nature." Now the writer informs us that for the very reason or cause that God so wonderfully blesses us through His precious Son, we must be certain to add on our part all diligence so that we will supply in our faith the graces of Christian living, thus to make fellowship with the divine nature an ever present reality in our lives: "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence" (verse 5).

Important Basic Considerations

Spiritual growth is what Peter has in mind in his teaching concerning the Christian graces. Indeed, such growth is the prominent teaching of Peter's second epistle, summed up by the exhortation of the concluding verse, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." But Peter insists that spiritual growth, the development of Christian personality, can be realized only as we give all diligence to it.

The word "diligence" in the Greek is *spoude*, meaning "earnestness, earnest application, diligence" (Harper), "earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything . . . interest one's self most earnestly" (Thayer), "bringing in all zeal or effort" (Barnes).

In using this word, Peter definitely affirms that Christians are active, not passive, in building Christian personality, and that it takes hard effort and constant, unremitting application on their part. This does not deny that they must receive God's grace through Christ's precepts, example, and presence in order to make the Christian graces a reality in their lives. But it does mean that in cooperation with God's grace they must consciously, zealously, and diligently devote all their worthy capacities to the God-given responsibility of becoming like Christ. True it is that "it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13); but it is just as true that in cooperation with the divine power that works in us, we must heed the command of the previous verse, ". . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

In expressing the goal that "we may present every man perfect in Christ," Paul stresses the necessity of the Christian cooperating with the working of God: "whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Colossians 1:28,29). The power, or grace, for Christian living comes from God, but the physical, emotional, and mental capacities of the Christian are the channel through which this power flows.

Were the Christian without the physical and mental capacities necessary

for reading or hearing God's word, it would be impossible for him to even remotely consider or contemplate the information it gives concerning the development of a Christ-like personality. Moreover, were he without the emotional capacity to respond to this information, it would be impossible for him to be motivated to become like Christ. And without the power of human will, he could not actively cooperate with God's grace in obeying the command to supply in his faith the graces of virtue, knowledge, etc.

Someone has described conventional Christian experience as "an initial spasm followed by a chronic inertia." But what God demands of those who would truly experience the riches of His grace is a zealous, living, vibrant, working, active dependence on and cooperation with Him in the ordering of their lives. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister. And we desire that each one of you may show the same *diligence* unto the fulness of hope even to the end: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:10-12).

Have you ever given due and careful consideration to the references in the New Testament that emphasize the Christian life as involving strain, sacrifice, hard effort, constant care, and watchfulness? For example, in Luke 13:24 Jesus commands, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." The language here is most striking. The word "strive" in the Greek is *agonizomai*, literally meaning "agonize." Yes, the Christian is to be so intent in his submission to the will of God that he will literally agonize to reach his heavenly goal. In 1 Timothy 4:7 the Spirit exhorts, "Exercise thyself unto godliness." The Greek work for "exercise" is *gumnazo*. It can literally be rendered as "gymnastize," from the strenuous efforts of an athlete in training for victory in the Greek games. In like manner, the Christian's walk with Christ in cooperation with the grace of God must be a strenuous effort for spiritual victory.

Read attentively the following passages: "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15,16); "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). See also Mark 13:33; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Titus 2:14.

Putting First Things First

Confirming the universal experience of men, the scriptures testify to the indispensability of diligence in the successful operation of one's economic affairs. "He becometh poor that worketh with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich" (Proverbs 10:4). "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men" (Proverbs 22:29). See Proverbs 12:24; 21:5; 27:23. If it is important that God's children be diligent in their economic

affairs, how infinitely more important it is that they be diligent in their spiritual affairs. *It is the serious matter of putting first things first.*

How tragic it is that so many members of the body of Christ show far more earnestness, intensity, and strenuousness in their seeking after "the food which perisheth" than they do after "the food which abideth unto eternal life" (John 6:27). They are like Scrooge, the principle character in Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, who lost sight of the higher values of living in his avaricious seeking after material wealth. Perhaps you recall the dialogue between him and the ghost of his old business partner Jacob Marley. Scrooge lamely tries to justify his greediness by complimenting Marley for his success in business: "But you were always a good man of business, Jacob." Marley's retort would receive the approval of every spiritually-minded Christian and, surely, of Christ Himself: "Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business. Justice, mercy, forbearance were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business."

Isn't it paradoxical that even the most hardened sinners of the world, who have no regard at all for their spiritual welfare, will show far more astuteness and diligence in the pursuit of earthly treasures than most Christians will in the pursuit of heavenly treasures? In the parable of the unrighteous steward, Jesus observed that "the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light." See Luke 16:1-13.

Purposeful Living

Diligent living is *purposeful* living. Only when one sets his heart and soul on the goal of holy living will he diligently apply himself to the building of Christian personality. The physical universe did not come into existence accidentally. It is the result of the intelligent plan and purpose of the Creator. A building does not come into existence accidentally, or by chance. It is the result of the plan and purpose of its builder. A literary composition does not result from the fortuitous jumbling of the letters of the alphabet. It is the result of the plan and purpose of its writer. A musical composition is not the chance combining together of the notes of the scale in a melodic, harmonic pattern. It is the result of the plan and purpose of its composer. And Christian personality can never be accidentally formed in any person. No one drifts into a life of holiness. It can only be the result of a life committed to Christ, with the definite purpose of becoming like Him.

Do you know what driftwood is? Broken and shattered planks and timbers the tide casts upon the shore. Bits of noble vessels gone to pieces. And the world is full of human driftwood, noble vessels gone to wreck and ruin.

Virtually every alcoholic is a piece of human driftwood. How many

people have ever deliberately planned to become drunken derelicts? Alcoholism is a state that people tend to drift into; it is the result of purposeless, aimless living.

People do not tend to deliberately wreck their marriage; they simply drift into the divorce court. Broken homes result from the failure of husbands and wives to purposefully and diligently work to make happy and successful marriages.

One can drift into a ruined life, but not into the Christian life. He cannot slip or slide into heaven.

The men who have been on God's side have never been drifters but swimmers. They did not surrender themselves to the current. They did not shout with the crowd. Their lives were purposeful. They diligently walked with their God.

Such a person was the apostle Paul. Like the blessed Lord, his was a purposeful life, diligently committed to Christian living. He plainly expressed the holy purpose of his life in the terse affirmation, "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). He further declared, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

The Danger of Negligence

The greatest threat to our spiritual welfare is not that we will deliberately, with malice and forethought, refuse to cooperate with the grace of God in building Christian personality, but simply that we will succumb to the weakness of the flesh and become careless, negligent, and indifferent concerning our moral and spiritual responsibilities.

About seventy-five years ago Phillips Brooks wrote some words that have lost none of their significance in this materialistic age: "The great danger facing all of us—let me say it again, for one feels it tremendously—is not that we shall make an absolute failure of life, nor that we shall fall into outright viciousness, nor that we shall be terribly unhappy, nor that we shall feel life has no meaning at all—not these things. The danger is that we may fail to perceive life's greatest meaning, fall short of its highest good, miss its deepest and most abiding happiness, be unable to tender the most needed service, be unconscious of life ablaze with the light of the presence of God—and be content to have it so—that is the danger.

"That some day we may wake up and find that always we have been busy with husks and trappings of life and have really missed life itself. For life without God, to one who has known the richness and joy of life with Him, is unthinkable, impossible. That is what one prays one's friends may be spared—satisfaction with a life that falls short of the

best, that has in it no tingle or thrill which comes from a friendship with the Father.”

When the Christian becomes careless and negligent concerning his spiritual life, he will inevitably ignore the teaching of God’s word concerning the Christian graces. In so doing, he will turn away from the grace of God and so neglect the eternal welfare of his soul. The only way to avoid the great danger of neglect is to earnestly and diligently give heed to the will and grace of God in Christ. For only by so doing can we keep from drifting into the aimless, Christless life that leads to eternal condemnation. This is the exhortation and warning given in Hebrews 2:1-3, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard.”

Looking Beyond

The life of diligence in the development of Christian personality is a life that is cognizant of the brevity of man’s earthly existence. It is a life that is aware of the immortality of the soul and the supreme necessity of saving that soul by the grace of God. It is a life that looks beyond the struggles and trials of this earthly life to “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). In the next verse the apostle exhorts, “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.”

The comment of Albert Barnes on the foregoing passage is worthy of our consideration: “The effect of such hopes and prospects should be to lead us to an earnest inquiry whether we are prepared to dwell in a holy world, and to make us diligent in performing the duties, and patient in bearing the trials of life. He who has such hopes set before him, should seek earnestly that he may be enabled truly to avail himself of them, and should make their attainment the great object of his life. He who is so soon to come to an end of all weary toil should be willing to labour diligently and faithfully while life lasts. He who is so soon to be relieved from all temptation and trial, should be willing to bear a little longer the sorrows of the present world. What are these compared with the joys that await us . . . A deep feeling that we are soon to stand in the presence of a holy God, our final Judge, cannot but have a happy influence in making us pure.”

Example of Jesus

Jesus Christ is our perfect example of a life yielded to the divine will in diligent application of self to holy living. Even as a lad, still under the

care of His earthly parents, He was always diligent in attending to His religious duties and obligations. To His mother Mary He said, "Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business," or, literally, "in the things of my Father" (Luke 2:49).

This spirit of perfect submission to His Father's will pervaded the entirety of His earthly life. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). Concerning His unflagging, untiring ardor and enthusiasm in the Father's service, He was quoted by His disciples as declaring, "Zeal for thy house shall eat me up" (John 2:17). See John 8:28-30; 17:4; Hebrews 5:8,9.

It is certainly evident that Christ through His Spirit cannot dwell in any person who fails to give diligence to living a life of holiness. To lack such diligence is to reject Christ and His example.

Questions

1. What is meant by the word "diligence"?
2. Discuss the concept that the power or grace for Christian living comes from God, but that the physical, emotional, and mental capacities of the Christian are the channel of this power.
3. Compare the importance of diligence in one's economic affairs and in his spiritual affairs.
4. Discuss some passages that emphasize the Christian life as involving strain, sacrifice, hard effort, etc., such as Luke 13:24; 1 Timothy 4:7; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 5:15,16; 2 Timothy 2:15.
5. Can Christian personality be built by accident or chance? Discuss.
6. Describe Paul's attitude concerning purposeful, diligent Christian living.
7. Discuss the connection between the Christian's hope of heaven and his growth in Christian personality.
8. What kind of example has Christ set before us in giving diligence to holy living?

FAITH

“In your *faith* supply virtue, etc.” The Greek word *epichoregesate* (from *epi choregeo*), translated as “supply,” is a very striking and pictorial term. In the original sense it referred to the training and staging of a grand chorus for the theater, the expenses to be paid by some rich patron. Peter suggests that as the different voices of a well-trained, proficient chorus are blended to produce noble, melodious, and harmonious singing, so the development of Christian personality will be realized by the blending of the Christian graces, producing the sublimest of all earthly music, that of a holy life.

J. M. Gibson said, “Have we not often wondered how endless the variety of music that can be won from the simple scale of seven with its octaves? As endless is the variety of soul-music that will flow from the simple scale of grace. And nothing but music will come from it. From a musical instrument quite correctly tuned, and on which the scale is faultless, the most discordant noises may be produced; but this cannot be in the spiritual sphere. Given the gamut of graces, all discord is banished from the life. Life will become one continual song, not always in the major mode, but perhaps most beautiful of all when it modulates into the minor in life’s dark days; but a song it shall be from the beginning to the end, from the keynote and starting point of Faith swelling onward and forward till it closes in the grand finale of the upper octave Love.”

As we contemplate the matchless beauty and magnificence of the grand chorus of the Christian graces, we must be aware of the great importance of faith in making such a chorus possible in the life of the Christian.

We notice that the command, “in your faith supply virtue, etc.,” does not recognize faith as one of the Christian graces, but rather as their basis. As each grace is to be an instrument by which the one that follows is to be brought out, all of them are to be traced to faith. In other words, faith is the root from which all the Christian graces spring. “All true morality is born of spirituality, and all complete morality is born of the spirituality created and maintained by Christian faith” (James Hastings).

Someone has observed that “faith may be regarded as the central theme of a symphony, with all the graces to support and amplify it.” Or as Doddridge suggests, “Let faith lead on at the head of the chorus of the graces, and let all the others follow in their order.”

It is evident that the apostle does not have to command his readers to supply faith, since he previously affirmed their possession of it: “. . . to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ” (verse 1). But he does require that they supply the Christian graces in the faith they already possess.

Faith Related to the Person of Christ

In observing the connection that exists between faith and the Christian graces, we must first see that faith is related to a person, the person of Christ. As faith in Christ is the means of receiving God's grace in salvation from sin, so also it is the means of receiving God's grace in the building of Christian personality. It is faith in Christ that makes a Christian, and it is faith in Christ that makes it possible to live like a Christian. As J. Hamilton has effectively stated, "It is faith which makes a dead soul a living one, and so susceptible of every excellence. It is faith which joins the worldling to the Lord Jesus, and so makes him concordant with the Saviour, and inclined toward all good. Whatever course there may be in the structure, faith is the foundation; whatever tints of splendour may variegate the robe of many colours, faith is the mordant which absorbs and fixes them all; whatever graces may move in the harmonious choir, faith occupies the forefront and is the leader of them all."

As we stressed in a previous lesson, Christian personality is not possible without the power of the indwelling Christ. But the only way that Christ can dwell in the Christian is through faith in Him. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in *faith*, the *faith* which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). ". . . that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through *faith*" (Ephesians 3:16,17).

The "adding on your part all diligence," discussed in the preceding lesson, which means active cooperation with Christ in the building of Christian personality, is inseparably related to faith in Christ. For it is only through faith that we can zealously cooperate with Christ in the successful, fruitful ordering of our lives in keeping with His plans and purposes.

It is Christ who gives us spiritual victory, but our access to this victory is our faith in Him. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). "For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

Writing of the spiritual victory through faith in Christ, E. Hopkins observed, "The power is all in Christ. Faith is the link that binds us to Him. Is there any power in faith? None whatever. Is there any power in a railway coupling? But look at these carriages, look at that train, look at that locomotive. Where is the power? You see it moving along, and you say, 'All the power is in the locomotive.' Well, how do the carriages manage to get along if it is all there? You say, 'There is a coupling, but it links the power of the locomotive with the carriages, and if you break the link, all the power is gone.'"

Another writer said, "Peter does not begin with ethical counsel. He

begins by taking us round the bank and showing us the mighty resources on which we can draw. And then after the contemplation of our wealth, he assumes that we are taking possession of it by faith, and that in the strength of that faith we are translating our strength into holy attainment in common life."

The apostle Paul, whose faith in Christ was strong and abiding, recognized that the source of all spiritual power is God. He knew that his labors with the Lord were simply the cooperation of his faith with the power of divine grace. He said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Characteristics of Faith

What are the characteristics of a faith that makes possible the successful development of Christian personality?

1. Recognition of Jesus Christ as the Only Begotten Son of God, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

No child of God could possibly be even remotely concerned with the building of Christian personality unless he indeed believed that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Master, the supreme authority to rule over his life. Such belief is basic in living like a Christian as well as in becoming a Christian. If after becoming a child of God a person later neglects or denies his faith, the exhortation, "in your faith supply virtue, etc.," would be entirely meaningless to him. Many who begin to walk with Christ later become forgetful of Him to whom they surrendered their lives, forgetful of Him as their Lord and Master. Thus they have no foundation for the building of Christian personality.

The faith that has access to spiritual victory in Christ must be a personal faith. It cannot be a faith foisted by one person upon another. Nothing worthwhile is accomplished by getting people to blindly accept Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God. Parents must certainly nurture their children "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), but the result must be a faith that is sincerely meaningful to those so nurtured, a faith that truly is theirs personally.

Many who have been baptized to become nominal members of the church possess no genuine faith of their own. They have merely done what was expected of them in keeping with their religious background. Is it little wonder that their lives are so spiritually impoverished?

2. Trust in Christ.

The faith that couples the Christian with the divine nature must be more than belief in the reality of Christ's deity and power. It must be the means of *depending* on Christ, or *trusting* in Him, for the power to develop Christian personality. Of course, one cannot depend on Christ

for such power unless he first believes that Christ possesses it. But it is entirely possible for a person to accept the fact of Christ's power, yet not to depend on it for holy, righteous living. Many church members whose lives are virtually spiritually empty will readily and glibly confess Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God. But they are not really committed to Him for power to build holy lives. Their dependence is on self rather than on Christ.

A person who truly trusts in the Lord for power to supply in his faith the graces of Christian living, looks to Him as the sole means of making such living possible. He views himself as the clay and Christ as the potter. Thus his constant prayer is, "Lord, mold me and make me after thy will."

Because he depends on the power of God through Christ for the development of Christian personality, he enjoys a full, rich prayer life. The trust he puts in Christ is the basic quality of effective praying. For in prayer he tacitly admits that he is weak and God is strong, and that without the divine presence he can never enjoy abundance of life in Christ.

He will pray for wisdom to understand the true meaning of the Christian graces, and he will pray for power to make them real in his life. See James 1:5; Philippians 1:9,10.

3. *Obedience.*

In the second lesson of this study, we discussed the necessity of obedience to the precepts of God's word in connection with Peter's teaching concerning the Christian graces, noting such passages as Luke 6:46; Romans 12:2; James 1:22; 1 John 5:3. We now stress that obedience to the will of God in cooperation with His grace must be prompted by faith. Any attempt to build Christian personality apart from faith is an abomination to God. "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The context of this passage is illustrative of the connection between acceptable obedience and genuine faith. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain . . . By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house . . . By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, now knowing whither he went" (verses 4,7,8).

Faith is the theme of the foregoing description. The inspired writer does not say that without *obedience* it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God, but that "without *faith* it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him." It was not the *obedience* per se of Abel, Noah, and Abraham that pleased God, but rather the obedience that was prompted by faith. Such faith never exalted or praised self, but always God alone.

The proper stress was not on *Abel* obeying God, but on *Abel* obeying *God*; not on *Noah* obeying God, but on *Noah* obeying *God*; not on *Abraham* obeying God, but on *Abraham* obeying *God*. By faith they had enthroned God in their hearts, depending on Him for the power and strength to do His will, and by faith their obedience to His will exalted and praised Him.

Christ commands His disciples to practice virtue, knowledge, patience, godliness, self-control, brotherly kindness, and love, but only in connection with their faith in Him. His command is not, "supply virtue, etc.," but "in your *faith* supply virtue, etc." If His disciples please Him they will certainly obey His will, but only as their obedience is prompted by genuine faith, a faith that in no way trusts in self but in Christ. Such obedience of faith will allow no place for pride in their hearts. The correct emphasis in obedience must always exalt Christ. It must always be Christians obeying *Christ*, rather than *Christians* obeying Christ.

The way of obedience by faith is the way of surrender and submission to Christ and His will. The truly believing Christian does not practice virtue, knowledge, etc. merely because it pleases him, but because it pleases his divine Master. He practices the Christian graces by faith because he wants to glorify Christ rather than self. His faith in Christ is the affirmation of 1 John 3:22, "We keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." His faith in Christ avails in the building of Christian personality because it is a "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

In understanding that acceptable obedience to Christ must be prompted by trusting, loving faith in Him, we must realize that the very nature of such faith is productive of obedience. The scriptures do not teach that Christians are to obey God in order to make their faith alive, but that if their faith is truly alive they will obey God. Thus diligence in the building of Christian personality must be focused on faith. When one becomes negligent and careless concerning his faith, he will be negligent and careless concerning obedience. The stronger the faith, the greater the obedience; the weaker the faith, the less the obedience.

Say what you will about the child of God who fails to heed the exhortation to supply in his faith the graces of Christian living, one valid conclusion that can be made concerning him is that either his faith is dead or it is dying. "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:26).

Although obedience is not the means of producing faith, it is the only means of proving that faith is really alive. "Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith" (James 2:18).

A Christian can never prove to the world by a mere verbal affirmation of his faith that he is a follower of Christ. It is only when his faith is

translated into obedience to the word of God that his influence will reflect the holiness of Christ.

A life devoid of the Christian graces is a disobedient life because it is devoid of genuine faith in Christ.

Vision, Aspiration, and Transformation of Faith

Faith in Christ means *vision*, the vision of Christ's perfection. When we live a life of faith in the Son of God, we live in the presence of moral and spiritual perfection, and view the possibilities of our lives as reflecting the holiness of Him who is the paragon of purity and goodness.

Faith in Christ means *aspiration*, not only the vision of Christ's perfection, but also a passionate desire for it. Nothing short of the holiness of the Lord satisfied the true believer. And he who aspires to the holiness of the Lord, aspires to a personality that is inclusive of the Christian graces.

Faith in Christ means *transformation*. We are changed into the likeness of our spiritual vision and aspiration, even into the likeness of Him in whom our faith is grounded.

Questions

1. What does the word "supply" mean in the phrase, "supply in your faith virtue, etc."?
2. Discuss the meaning of faith as the Christian's access to spiritual victory in Christ.
3. Why must faith in Christ be a *personal* faith?
4. Discuss the importance of *trust* in Christ in the building of Christian personality.
5. What is the connection between the Christian's faith in Christ and his prayer life?
6. Why must acceptable obedience to God be prompted by faith?
7. How does the Christian prove that his faith is alive?
8. Discuss the meaning of faith as vision, aspiration, and transformation?
9. What is the status of your faith? Do you truly believe that Christ is the divine Son of God and the power for Christian living? Are you truly depending on him for power to build Christian personality? Are you truly seeking spiritual victory in Christ? Are you diligently obeying the divine injunction to "supply in your faith virtue, and in your virtue knowledge, etc."?

VIRTUE

“. . . in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:5-7).

We now begin our study of the Christian graces proper. The inspired writer designates *seven* graces. This was the perfect number to the ancients of the eastern world. Peter implies that the perfect number of graces is calculated to make the perfect Christian. Were these graces completely and fully present in a human life, as they were in the life of Jesus, they would make for the perfect Christian personality.

“Wholeness” in Christian personality is what the faithful disciple of Christ seeks, and such wholeness can only be realized to the extent that all the Christian graces become part of his life. Indeed, not any one of these graces is efficacious as a personality trait when standing alone. Each one depends on the others to make it an ennobling trait in Christian personality. The “in” so often repeated implies that each grace is a kind of soil in which the next one grows, all of which are to be traced back to faith. “Note how each step gained in this scale of graces produces and facilitates the next; and by retracing the scale backwards we may also observe how each successive step tempers, supplements, and perfects its predecessor” (Johann Bengel).

Throughout his enumeration of the seven graces, Peter is thinking of the false teachers he is ready to attack (2:1ff). He arranges his list of graces as answer to these pseudo-prophets and to the way they order their lives according to their pretended faith. Instead of moral courage, or virtue, they supply moral cowardice; instead of knowledge, spiritual and moral blindness; instead of self-control, libertinistic license; instead of patience, stubborn adherence to evil; instead of godliness, ungodliness; instead of brotherly kindness, hatred for God’s children; instead of love for all men, misanthropy.

The first grace designated is virtue. It is so designated as the basic characteristic of the kind of faith advocated by the inspired writer. From the Greek *arete*, it was the standing word in heathen ethics, but it is used only four times in the New Testament: Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3,5. In two of these passages it refers to a quality of God; in the other two to a quality of man. In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, it is used in Isaiah 42:12; 63:7, referring to the *praises* of God, in Habbakuk 3:3, referring to the *glory* of God, and in Zechariah 6:13, referring to the *glory* of the coming Messiah.

Arete is defined by lexicographers as follows:

Liddell-Scott: “*Goodness, excellence*, of any kind; but in Homer, like

Lat. *virtus* (from *vir*), *manhood, prowess, valour*: also *manly beauty*, etc. . . . in moral sense, goodness, virtue."

Harper: "*goodness, good quality of any kind . . . virtue, uprightness.*"

Abbott-Smith: "prop whatever procures pre-eminent estimation of a person or thing, in Hom. any kind of conspicuous advantage. Later confined by philosophical writers to intrinsic eminence—moral goodness, virtue."

George Richer Berry: "*virtue, any moral excellence, perfection.*"

We observe that the definition of *arete* common to all the foregoing authorities is that of goodness, excellence, uprightness. This is the obvious meaning of the word as it is rendered in Philippians 4:8, designating things that are "excellent." Cf. The New English Bible, "And now my friends . . . whatever is excellent (*arete*) and admirable—fill your thoughts with these things." It is also the meaning in 1 Peter 2:9, "the excellencies (*aretas*) of him [God]."

Christian Manliness

In Peter's use of the word as a Christian grace it cannot mean excellence in a general sense because it is only *one* excellence out of seven. A person is not virtuous, upright, good, or excellent in general unless he possesses all the Christian graces. *Arete*, virtue, must stand therefore in the passage under consideration for something distinct and specific, that of *force, energy, manly strength*. Thayer defines it as "2 Pet. 1:5 al, take it here specifically; viz moral *vigor*." Bengel's definition is "moral power, moral energy, vigor of the soul." Young's Analytical Concordance defines it as "force, strength (of mind or body)." As Liddell-Scott points out, the Latin equivalent of *arete* is *virtus*, from *vir* (man), meaning manhood.

James Hastings has observed, "Virtue, to the Latins, meant, thus, the quality of manhood, or heroism. It was the special quality of life, without which a man was merely a creature, an animal. It gave tone, and dignity, and force to men. Virtue and manliness were almost synonymous words. To be manly was to be virtuous; to be virtuous was to be manly. And it is in this sense that the word is used in our text. For the Greek word conveys just this conception of manly virtue."

Paul's statement, ". . . quit ye like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13), is, in essence, an exhortation for Christians to possess this manly quality of virtue. Christians are to be *men*, real men, not effeminate or weaklings without the moral energy and force to live for Christ.

In considering the concept of true Christian manliness, we mean the kind of manliness exhibited in the life of the perfect man Jesus Christ. When Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, shouted to the rabble clamoring for the blood of Jesus, "Behold, the man!" (John 19:5), he unwittingly gave utterance to a sublime truth. Christ Jesus was indeed *the*

man, the *ideal* man, the perfect representative of all that is highest and grandest in manhood. For he was the *man* compared with whom there is no other. Thus we must keep uppermost in our hearts the vision and example of the perfect *man* as we consider the meaning of Christian virtue, or moral vigor and strength.

The pagan ideal of manliness was best exemplified by the efficient, energetic, hard fighting soldier. It was in the thick of battle, arrayed against the enemy and facing the dangers of injury and death, that true manliness showed itself. In this connection, it is significant that the derivation of the word *arete* (virtue) is a military term, *ares*, the Greek god of war.

How fitting it is that *arete* should describe a trait of the faithful disciple of Christ. The very nature of life in a world of sin is that of conflict fraught with grave dangers. The forces of light and good, led by Christ, are arrayed against the forces of darkness and evil, led by the devil. The Christian is fighting on the Lord's side. "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). See Ephesians 6:10-17.

As only strong, energetic, manly soldiers were considered virtuous in the pagan sense, so only strong, energetic, manly soldiers of Christ are considered virtuous in the Christian sense. The virtue of the pagans, however, was self-centered, whereas the virtue of Christians is God-centered. The manly pagan soldier fought in his own strength alone, but the manly Christian soldier fights in the strength and might of the Lord. Read again Ephesians 6:10.

We must remember that the virtue advocated by Peter is a quality that is to be supplied in the Christian's faith. The fight he is making on the side of Christ is "the good fight of *faith*." John Lillie describes this virtue as one "that faith inspires, and which in turn honors faith." He continues, "Let not yours be a timid, feeble, ineffective faith; but let it show a power and energy befitting its source—even the Divine power and might celebrated before in the third verse . . . What the apostle requires of us is a certain manliness of character and action, a strenuous tone and vigor of soul."

Our faith in Christ is to be itself a source of power to us, as it is rooted and grounded in the strength of Christ. This it will be if we give diligence to make it a vigorous, manly faith. It is not enough that the Christian's personality should be beautiful; it should also be strong. Strength and beauty should both be characteristics of God's people. But how often the quality of strength is absent from the personality of Christians. Thus the estimate of so many of the world is that Christianity is synonymous with weakness and effeminacy. The world is apt to think that only weaklings are followers of Christ—persons who are weak in affections, in personality, in attitude. It is most necessary, therefore, that if the Christian would influence men to come to the Lord, he must manifest a strong, energetic faith, a faith that is able to overcome the world

in the strength of the Lord. In 1 Peter 2:9, the writer exhorts the Christian to "show forth the excellencies (*aretas*) of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." This the Christian cannot do unless he has the virtue (*arete*) that reflects the manly vigor of Him who was *the man*.

Courage

The basic, peculiar quality of Christian manliness, of moral vigor, is that of courage, the natural fruit of trusting faith in Christ. Were the efforts of the Christian to live for Christ met by little or no opposition, then courage would be unnecessary. But, as we previously considered, the Christian lives in a world of conflict. On every hand there are dangers facing him. His efforts to be holy and righteous will be met by strong opposition wherever he goes. Thus Peter insists that in giving diligence to supply in our faith the Christian graces we must be certain to be courageous, to have the attitude that disposes us to follow Christ without being daunted at the prospect of dangers and difficulties in the way.

Among the Romans virtue meant especially manly courage in the field. To them, military heroism was virtue in its highest form. They abhorred cowardice. The true hero courageously faced the conflict no matter how strong the opposition might be. Relying on strength and skill and endurance, on force of hand and head and heart, he risked life and limb without flinching in meeting his adversary. Victory was his goal, and for this he fought energetically and heroically.

The physical daring of the Roman soldier was a fine and stirring spectacle, but few things are more magnificent than moral courage. It is to this that true religion has always owed its conquests in the strength of God: the fortitude and heroism of faith.

Examples of Courage

We see this heroic quality of faith in the great spiritual heroes of the Old Testament. Look at Abraham, with firmness of purpose and faith in God, facing the dangers of an unknown land in answering the call of God. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8).

Look at the courageous faith of Moses in refusing "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, *not fearing the wrath of the king . . .*" (Hebrews 11:24-27).

Look at the courageous faith of Daniel as he was willing to be cast into the den of lions rather than obey the king's decree that petitions could only be made to him. The record states, "And when Daniel knew

that the writing was signed, he went into his house . . . and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Daniel 6:10). See Hebrews 11:32-38.

Perfect moral courage characterized the entire earthly life of our perfect example Jesus Christ. Opposed by the Jewish elders, chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, not once did He wilt before the opposition. He stood for truth and righteousness in all circumstances, at all times, in the face of all danger. Facing unjust trials, cruel scourging, and finally the cross, "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

We see the spirit of the Lord's moral courage exemplified in the lives of many of the early saints, whose undaunted faith made possible such great strides in advancing the cause of Christ. See Acts 20:18-25; 21:10-14; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; 2 Timothy 4:7; Revelation 2:10. It was this very spirit of courageous, undaunted optimism manifested by the early Christians in the face of death that caused many pagans to turn to Christ. When they beheld a band of Christians standing hand in hand in an arena, with shining faces turned toward the heavens, joyously singing a hymn of praise to their God in the name of the Christ, waiting for the wild animals that would be turned loose to tear them to shreds, they were constrained to investigate and subsequently accept the claims of the One who could instill such great moral courage in the hearts of His followers.

Courage to Profess One's Faith

We can understand why virtue, or moral courage, is placed in the forefront of the Christian graces since it is needed at the very outset of the Christian life. The Christian is called to profess his faith in Christ against the opposition of an unbelieving world. When men regard the Christian as a fool and fanatic, it takes courage to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" (Romans 1:16). The confession of Christ made by a person preceding baptism, usually in the presence of people who are in favor of what he is doing, does not take the courage needed by Christians to confess the Lord in the face of opposition. See Matthew 10:32,33 in the context. Many of the early Christians were threatened with death for professing their faith in Christ, and it took great courage to confess Him in the face of such mortal danger. Although few of us, if any, will ever be called to face death for our faith, still we must have the courage to openly profess and defend our stand for Christ when infidels, agnostics, and atheists ridicule the gospel.

Courage to Live One's Faith

Not only must the Christian have the courage to profess his faith in Christ, but also to *live* his faith. It takes manliness, moral courage, to put the Lord first in the use of the money He has placed in our hands, to

sacrificially give to Him before we even consider expenditures for the so-called necessities of life.

It takes manliness, moral courage, to resist the temptation of the pettiness of scrambling for the symbols of status in a crassly materialistic society and to live in simplicity as humble followers of Christ.

It takes manliness, moral courage, to say *no* when the world says *yes*, and to say *yes* when the world says *no*, in being loyal to our Master.

It takes manliness, moral courage, to confess one's sins, to say to the one sinned against, "I have wronged you; please forgive me." It also takes manliness, moral courage, to say when sinned against, "I forgive you."

Whatever the opposition may be, whatever the temptation, it does indeed take a faith strongly fortified with moral courage for the Christian to live for Christ. It is for such faith in an ever growing measure that every Christian should unceasingly pray.

"For himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5,6).

Questions

1. What is the significance of seven Christian graces?
2. Discuss the concept of "wholeness" in the building of Christian personality.
3. How is *arete*, virtue, defined by the lexicographers? Why does it not mean moral excellency in general as it is used to designate one of the Christian graces?
4. Why is the quality of moral courage so vitally necessary in fighting the good fight of faith?
5. Discuss the moral courage of some of the great Bible heroes of faith, such as Abraham, Moses, Daniel, and Paul.
6. Describe the perfect moral courage manifested by Jesus during His earthly ministry.
7. Why does the public profession of our faith in Christ take moral courage?
8. Name and discuss some ways in which we manifest moral courage in living for Christ.
9. Are you courageously confessing Christ and living for Him day by day?

KNOWLEDGE

"In your virtue *knowledge*." In giving diligence to building Christian personality upon the foundation of our faith, we must give due consideration to *knowledge*, which is to be supplied in our virtue.

The Greek word for the grace of knowledge is *gnosis*. This is not to be confused with *epignosis*, the word rendered as knowledge in verses 2, 3, and 8. In these passages Peter refers to our knowledge of the persons of God and Christ, the basis for the grace, peace, and power we enjoy in Christ. This is the saving knowledge of Christ and the recognition of Him as the source of all spiritual knowledge necessary for partaking of the divine nature. Obviously, before one can have the *gnosis*, knowledge, that comes from Christ, he must *know* Christ as his Saviour and recognize Him as the source of all spiritual and moral *gnosis*. See Colossians 2:3.

The word *gnosis* is defined by lexicographers as follows:

Abbott-Smith: "1. a seeking to know, inquiry, investigation. 2. knowledge in NT, specially of spiritual truth."

Liddell-Scott: "1. a seeking to know, a judicial inquiry. 2. knowledge: wisdom."

Thayer: "*gnosis*, by itself signifies general *intelligence*, understanding . . . the general knowledge of the Christian religion . . . moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living."

Harper: "*knowledge*; *knowledge* of an especial kind and relatively high character; more particularly in respect of Christian enlightenment."

In studying the foregoing definitions and in gleaning information from several commentaries, the writer of this discussion has concluded that the grace of *gnosis*, knowledge, has four basic aspects, which we shall now consider.

Desire to Know the Truth

Before one can have insight into truth, to actually know the truth, he must have a desire for the truth—a seeking, inquiring, investigating spirit. Jesus had this spirit in mind when He said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7).

We can readily understand how the grace of virtue, or moral courage, contributes to the grace of knowledge. The diligent, zealous, courageous Christian desires above all else to know the mind of Christ, the truth that makes men free. See John 8:32. Courage is as essential to spiritual and moral probity as it is to physical heroism. A free, virile spiritual life, one that allows liberty for growth toward the complete stature of Jesus Christ, cannot be maintained by moral cowardice. The moral coward does

not want honest answers to the moral problems of life insofar as honest means unpleasant or disturbing. He wants answers that will help him escape from the harsh realities of living in a world of sin. He wants the blinds pulled down, rather than up, on reality. He finds it easier to be ignorant rather than to be informed.

In all realms of life, courage in the search for truth has led to the advancement of civilization. The great pioneers in every sphere of investigation were men who would not allow themselves to be dominated by ignorance. Their courage of conviction and honesty of purpose caused them to risk the loss of many humanly desirable objectives as they faced the disapproval of ignorant, prejudiced men. It took great courage for such mental and artistic giants as Galileo, Copernicus, Pasteur, Beethoven, and Debussy to advance their theories, discoveries, and accomplishments. Think of the gain to mankind resulting from the fortitude of these heroes of progress in the face of bitter opposition. But think of the greater gain to mankind of the courageous soldiers of the cross who desire and seek the eternal truths that make for the savoring, saving influence of Christian personality.

The spirit of honest, courageous inquiry after truth is enjoined by the commands: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21); "Let God be found true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

"In our manliness we are to seek after knowledge. The quality of courage is to be shown by the fearlessness of our researches into all the works and ways of God. We are not to be deterred by any dread of consequences from investigating and finding out the whole truth. The Bible places no restrictions upon an inquiring spirit. It does not prevent men from examining and proving all things, and bringing even the most sacred subjects to the test of reason. God says to us in regard to the holiest things, 'Come let us reason together'" (H. MacMillan).

A sincere desire for truth assumes genuine love of truth. And if one deeply loves the truth, sincerely desiring to understand it, he will also desire to translate it into his life, to make it the warp and woof of his personality. Knowing God's word, then, is inextricably involved in the desire to obey the truth. This is evidently taught by Jesus in John 7:17, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself."

One may become a good academic scholar of the Bible who seeks to know it merely as history, philosophy, ethics, etc., but he will never truly know it as the all-important revelation of God to man. Therefore, if academic knowledge is all we seek in the study of God's word, the knowledge we will receive will not be different from that of infidels, atheists, and agnostics who read the Bible.

Comprehension of the Truth

As the comprehension of truth is preceded by the desire for truth, so

the application of truth in Christian living must be preceded by the comprehension of truth. Paul said, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:15-17). One cannot walk wisely, in conformity with God's will, who does not understand what the will of God is. But by the understanding of God's will is not meant merely the memorization of scriptures. One could possibly memorize the whole Bible, word for word, and yet have little or no understanding of God's will. Our seeking to know the will of God must always be realized by an intelligent comprehension of divine truth.

Mental Industry

The price of scholarship in any realm is mental industry, an intelligent, constant, unremitting pursuit after knowledge. Those who desire to know the word of God must be willing to pay the price of hard, persevering, intelligent application to Bible study. There can be no high attainment of Bible knowledge without mental perspiration. The relationship of Bible study to Bible understanding is simply the relationship of sowing and reaping. If one applies himself spasmodically and lackadaisically to Bible study, sowing seeds of mental lethargy and laziness, he will reap only in limited understanding of God's will. But if he applies himself regularly and unstintingly to Bible study, sowing seeds of mental industry, he will reap in extensive understanding of God's will.

The intelligent, wise Christian is aware that the Bible has profound depths of meaning that cannot be reached by mentally sluggish and shallow minded people. He recognizes that he is responsible before God to diligently use his mental faculties in growing in the knowledge of Christ and in never being content to remain in the shallows of Bible understanding. ". . . even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction . . . But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:15,16,18). Cf. Hebrews 6:1.

The intelligent, diligent student of God's word, who would receive genuine insight into the mind of God, learns and applies the rules of Bible study. His investigation of divine truth is not merely a process of reading, but a methodical, systematic study. As a good student of the Bible, he is willing to use any and all means at his disposal to make such study possible. He feels that it is considerably more important to invest some of his money in books that will benefit him in his study of the Bible than it is to spend money for books and magazines of general interest. He seeks information from Bible atlases and dictionaries, con-

cordances, commentaries, modern speech versions of the Bible, books on Bible evidences, etc. These sources of help in Bible study are invaluable to the one who would seek to do his best in gaining insight into the mind of the Spirit.

Practical Wisdom

The apostle Peter does not exaggerate, as we are apt to do, the importance of mere head knowledge in enjoining on us the grace of knowledge. It is quite true, of course, that he urges with great zeal the intelligent apprehension of divine truth. But the practical use of knowledge, which is *wisdom* or *skill*, is most prominent in his mind—not mere *head* knowledge alone, but what may be properly called *life* knowledge.

In lesson two we noted that the words of the Bible have nothing to contribute to Christian living but only as the spiritual concepts they convey to man's understanding are translated into his life. Now we see the necessity of wisdom, or astuteness, in making this translation possible.

King James I of England was described by his contemporaries as the wisest fool in Christendom because he had gained a storehouse of facts about various subjects but had little practical understanding. Many in the church are like this. They have gained intellectual comprehension concerning many great truths of God's word, but they sorely lack in the wisdom to translate this comprehension into practical, everyday living.

In His word the Lord does not spell out all the specific problems that will confront the Christian and all the specific choices he must make in his daily life. But He does give the Christian the principles of right conduct that make it possible for him to face every problem and to make every choice in life in harmony with the sanctity of his relationship to Christ. And what the Christian preeminently needs to solve specific problems and to make specific choices, is a keen sense of moral discernment, of *life* knowledge, or wisdom. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11). "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9,10). "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:5,6). See Proverbs 4:7; 14:8,15,16.

The Christian must depend on the help of God for the wisdom, or

discernment, involved in the grace of knowledge, just as he must look to God for help in every other phase of building a Christlike personality. Thus he must rely on the power of believing prayer. "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting . . ." (James 1:5,6).

Contribution of Knowledge to Diligence, Faith and Virtue

It is true that diligence, faith, and virtue make an invaluable contribution to the grace of knowledge, and it is just as true that the grace of knowledge makes an invaluable contribution to diligence, faith, and virtue.

The Bible teaches that diligence or zeal must be according to divine knowledge. Without intelligent insight into the comprehension of God's word, and the wise application of it, zeal will be misdirected. Zeal for God that is not enlightened by His word spells tragic waste. Paul's kinsmen in the flesh, the Jews, were most diligent in their religious pursuits, but their diligence was not according to God's will and thus was unacceptable to Him. "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2,3).

Paul was an intensely earnest and whole-hearted man in whatever he undertook. The zeal which led him as Saul of Tarsus to persecute from city to city those who called on the name of the Lord Jesus was just as intense as the zeal which led him afterwards, when he became the great apostle to the Gentiles, to diligently work for the advancement of the Lord's kingdom. In the former case, however, his zeal was without knowledge. See Acts 22:3,4; 1 Timothy 1:12-15.

When any Christian diligently espouses a doctrine that is not in keeping with the knowledge of God's word, he displeases God and vainly expends his energy. As knowledge without zeal is vain, so zeal without knowledge is vain. James Hastings said, "The Christian possessing zeal without knowledge to guide it, is like a ship without a pilot, in danger of splitting on the rocks."

True knowledge is also connected to a living faith. Faith requires intelligent understanding of God's word and moral discernment in order to grasp and effectively execute its insights. It cannot exist apart from the knowledge of God's word. "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

We can also understand how the grace of knowledge makes an invaluable contribution to the grace of virtue. There is always the danger that the Christian's courage will degenerate into blind recklessness. This will certainly happen unless it functions under the guidance of intelligence and wisdom. "Manliness, that which colloquially we call pluck, without knowledge is practically useless, except perhaps to a bulldog.

The man who knows is always head and shoulders above the man who does not know, though the latter be the superior of the former in vigour and endurance . . . Ignorance is the mother of degradation; knowledge is the road to moral and social improvement. Plato said, 'Better to be unborn than untaught, for ignorance is the root of misfortune' " (B. Wilberforce.

Conclusion

As our perfect example Jesus Christ glorified the Father by living His earthly life in the knowledge of and submission to the divine will (John 17:4; Hebrews 10:9), we must imitate His example and so also glorify the Father. Cf. John 15:8. Ignorance of the word, false conceptions of its teaching, blind faith, unreasoning zeal, reckless courage, are the very antithesis of light bearing. If we would let our light shine before men so that they will glorify the Father (Matthew 5:16), we must have zeal, faith, and virtue that embrace the grace of knowledge.

Questions

1. Name the four basic aspects of the grace of knowledge.
2. Why is moral courage essential in the search for divine truth?
3. Discuss 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and Romans 3:4.
4. What is the price of Bible scholarship? Discuss.
5. What is the difference between *head* knowledge and *life* knowledge?
6. What are some of the perplexing, difficult moral questions you have had to face in life? How did you answer these questions?
7. What contribution does the grace of knowledge make to diligence, faith, and virtue?
8. Read and discuss the parable of the dishonest steward (Luke 16:1-9).
9. Is the grace of knowledge real in your life?

SELF-CONTROL

“In your knowledge *self-control*.” To be supplied in our spiritual and moral knowledge is *self-control*, the third in the list of Christian graces. The Greek word rendered as self-control in the New Testament is *egkrateia*. It is defined by lexicographers in general as temperance, continence, self-control. It is found in three New Testament passages: Acts 24:25; Galatians 5:23, 2 Peter 1:6. The Greek word for “to be self-controlled” is *egkrateuomai*, found in two passages: 1 Corinthians 7:9; 9:25. In the former passage it expressly designates those who cannot curb their sexual desires. In Titus 1:8 the Greek word *egkrates* is used, meaning “strong, stout, possessed of mastery of self” (Harper).

The basic meaning in Peter’s use of *egkrateia* is the mastery of the sensual appetites, for the apostle obviously has in mind the contrast between self-control and the lasciviousness, greed, and lust of the heretical teachers (2:1-3,10; 3:3). The moral courage and true knowledge of faithful Christians discipline desire and make it the servant rather than the master of life. But the sensually, greedily disposed false teachers, with their moral cowardice and false knowledge, allowed their desires to be the master rather than the servant of life.

We cannot believe, however, that Peter limits the idea of self-control to the mastery of the sensual appetites, even though this is the basic meaning he has in mind. To limit it to this interpretation would be to give too narrow and impoverished a range to his thoughts. Self-control in its fullest sense, as Peter was surely aware, implies that the man who has genuine mastery of himself has not only the propensities of his body under control, but also the faculties of his mind. Like the Greek athlete who strove for victory in the games, the faithful Christian “exerciseth self-control in *all things*” (1 Corinthians 9:25).

The Greek ideal was that of the individual being perfected in a harmonious whole in which both body and mind are self-controlled. In keeping with the moral and spiritual precepts of Christ, this is what the faithful Christian also seeks. A basic difference, however, between the Greek and Christian ideal is that the former is centered in man and the latter is centered in Christ. The control the Christian has over self is to be the control he allows Christ to have over him (Galatians 2:20). This does not refute the Christian’s free will, but simply affirms that when he exercises self-control his will becomes the channel through which Christ’s control flows.

Christ and the Whole Christian

The Christian belongs to Christ by right of purchase. “Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which

ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). Included in Christ's purchase of the body is the mind, for the *whole* man belongs to Christ—both body and mind. Paul has this in mind when he exhorts Christians, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your *bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your *mind*, that ye prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1,2).

Commenting on this passage, Adam Clarke said, "All these phrases are *sacrificial*, and show there must be a complete surrender of the person—the body, the whole man, mind and flesh, to be given to God; and that he is to consider himself no more his own; but the entire property of his Maker." See 2 Corinthians 10:5.

The biblical principle upon which the Christian ideal of self-control is based is this relationship the Christian occupies as belonging to Christ in his whole person. Since he is not his own, but belongs to the Lord, then what he must do with himself is what the Lord wants him to do. It is the Lord's business what is done with His property, and the Christian is His property.

The faithful Christian does not strive to maintain a healthy body because of self-pride, but because he recognizes that his body is Christ's property. Neither does he strive out of any egotistical sense to maintain a strong, healthy mind. He is aware that his mind belongs to Christ and that he must also take care of this property of his Master. In all the Master's property entrusted to him, he strives to be "a good steward of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

The Christian lives for Christ as he allows Christ to work through his entire being, both body and mind. It is unthinkable that the faithful Christian should ever deliberately give way to temptation and thus minimize or nullify the use of his physical and mental capacities in the Lord's service.

The Incorruptible Crown

The Christian's earthly goal is not to please himself, but to please the Master who owns him, to do His will in all things. See 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:4. It is only as the Christian strives by faith for this God ordained earthly goal, controlling his faculties through the power of Christ and in keeping with His will, that his faith will give him access to the heavenly goal. "Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not

beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

The Greek athlete who prepared for an athletic contest did anything or gave up anything necessary for gaining the laurel wreath of victory, a corruptible crown. In undergoing such rigorous training, he had to exercise the fullest possible control over himself.

The Christian has a far greater crown of victory to receive than the Greek athlete, an incorruptible crown in heaven. How infinitely more important it is that he should do anything or give up anything necessary for him to gain this heavenly crown. In undergoing such rigorous spiritual training, how infinitely more important it is that he exercise the fullest possible control over himself in withstanding all temptation and in standing for the right. See 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10.

Undeniably, receiving the incorruptible crown of righteousness was supremely important to the apostle Paul. The striking figure he used of "buffeting his body, and bringing it into bondage," does not mean that he actually lacerated the flesh, but rather that by bringing self-seeking under control he made the body the slave of the soul. In so doing, he followed the injunction set forth by Christ: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). See Romans 8:13; 1 Peter 2:11.

Knowledge and Self-control

In light of what previously has been said about self-control and what shall follow in the remainder of this lesson, it is necessary that we have in mind a clear picture of the close connection between the graces of knowledge and self-control, since the latter is to be supplied in the former.

True knowledge is an indispensable prerequisite to Christian self-control. It is only as the Christian intelligently understands the word of God and has the wisdom to apply its principles in the varied circumstances of life, that he can have a sound basis for knowing how self-control is to be exercised in harmony with the spirit of Christian living. Where self-control is not guided by true spiritual knowledge, it degenerates into fanaticism.

Then, too, self-control makes an indispensable contribution to knowledge. There is nothing more fatal to spiritual discernment than the abandonment of one's life to dissipation and fleshly lusts. A person whose mind is beclouded with alcohol, who is blear-eyed from a night of carousing, whose strength is sapped by licentious living, will neither have the disposition nor the energy to seek after the knowledge of God's holy word. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-14.

Moreover, knowledge itself must be kept under control. "Knowledge

puffeth up” (1 Corinthians 8:1). “Knowledge has a tendency to foster a spirit of self-sufficiency, and lead us to become proud, boastful, and self-confident. We begin to think our wisdom will preserve us from all dangers, and enable us to overcome all temptation. We forget that the flesh is strong, that the world is alluring, and that the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. We forget that the Christian life is a struggle, and that it is no easy matter to crucify the flesh with its affection. As so the apostle says, ‘In your knowledge let there be a supply of self-control’ ” (J. McIlveen).

The Christian is to exercise self-control in three distinct realms: 1. Abstaining from intrinsic evil. 2. Abstaining from certain lawful things. 3. Moderation in lawful things.

Abstaining from Intrinsic Evil

The self-control we are considering here is abstinence from actual, intrinsic sin, defined in 1 John 3:4 as “lawlessness.” This means abstaining from everything that definitely is contrary to God’s word, that is evil within itself, that is wrong under all circumstances.

But there are those in the church who tacitly add to this definition of sin by affirming that anything that gives pleasure to people is also wrong. To them anyone who receives pleasure from life is intemperate and self-indulgent, per se. Theirs is a religion of gloom. They would virtually take all the laughter and joy out of the world. Theirs is the attitude of the Puritans, of whom it is said that their objection to bull baiting was not that it gave pain to the bulls, but that it gave pleasure to the spectators.

A thing is not wrong, as such, because it is pleasurable, or enjoyable. Eating is not wrong merely because the food is tasty. Christian fellowship is not wrong just because it makes for laughter and good cheer. Driving a car is not wrong just because it is an enjoyable experience. Of course, if one makes the pursuit of pleasure the purpose of his life, he is wrong because his sense of values are wrong. But we cannot justifiably accuse any child of God of lacking in self-control merely because he gets pleasure and enjoyment out of living.

Again noting the Christian’s responsibility of abstaining from actual evil, we must recognize that there is no such thing as exercising self-control by sinning in moderation. If a thing is expressly condemned in God’s word, it is intrinsically wrong, and the self-controlled Christian will completely abstain from it. “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). For example, fornication is a form of evil. *Don’t*. Drunkenness is a form of evil. *Don’t*. And so on.

And what about the necessity of controlling our tempers, “to be angry, and sin not” (Ephesians 4:26)? What about controlling our tongues to keep them from slander, backbiting, gossip, talebearing? See James 3:1-12. “It may be very easy for us to hold back from the use of

intoxicating drinks if we have no temptation in that direction. It does not follow that it is easy to abstain from hasty words or angry feelings. But to give way to the latter would be just as much a breach of self-control as to yield to the former" (James Hastings).

Abstaining from Certain Lawful Things

By lawful things is meant those things which are not wrong in themselves, which violate no moral or spiritual principle, but which are not intrinsic acts of righteousness.

But what may be perfectly all right for the Christian to do under some circumstances may be self-indulgence, or an occasion of sin, under others, even though done in moderation. The principle of Christian responsibility to others is involved here. When one seriously recognizes his responsibility to others, he will exercise self-control by abstaining from anything and everything lawful that would nullify his influence for good. He cannot be loving toward his fellow men and at the same time conclude that he has the right to do anything not wrong in itself no matter how deleterious its effect may be on others.

Paul, dealing with lawful things, said, "All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth" (Romans 14:20,21). He further said, "All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify. Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good" (1 Corinthians 10:23,24). See 1 Corinthians 10:31-33.

Moderation in Lawful Things

Everything we do that is lawful, which does not nullify our influence for good, must be confined within the limits of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. It is in this realm that the Christian must exercise the greatest wisdom and discrimination. It isn't difficult for even the least discriminating Christian to recognize the necessity of exercising self-control in abstaining from such sins as stealing, murder, drunkenness, etc.; but it takes a high level of astuteness and wisdom for a Christian to recognize the limits he must set to his eating, sleeping, leisure time activities, etc., to know where self-control ends and self-indulgence begins.

The answer to this problem is not in ascetic abstinence. Read Colossians 2:20-23, where such abstinence is condemned. John Wesley declared, "It is using the world, so to use all outward, and so to restrain all inward things, they may become a means of what is spiritual; a scaling ladder to ascend to what is above. Intemperance is to *abuse* the world. He that uses anything below, looking no higher, and getting no farther, is intemperate. He that uses the creature only so as to attain to more of the Creator, is alone temperate, and walks as Christ himself." See 1 Corinthians 7:31.

When the Christian makes the lawful things of life his servant, to contribute to his well-being, he exercises self-control. But when they become his master, he exercises self-indulgence. Faithful Paul refused to allow anything, however lawful, to become his master. "All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). May this be our solemn and truthful affirmation.

Example of Christ

In giving diligence to supply in our knowledge the grace of self-control, let us constantly keep before us the perfect example Jesus Christ. The all-wise Lord had perfect mastery of Himself under all of life's circumstances. Never once did He succumb to the temptation to do anything intrinsically wrong. Never once did He do any lawful thing to the injury of others. Never once did He do any lawful thing immoderately. See Matthew 20:28; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:21,22; Hebrews 7:26. Cf. Matthew 11:19.

Questions

1. What is meant by the phrase, "exerciseth self-control in all things"?
2. Compare the Greek and Christian ideal of self-control.
3. How much of the Christian belongs to Christ?
4. Discuss the contribution knowledge makes to self-control and the contribution self-control makes to knowledge.
5. Is a thing wrong, per se, because it is pleasurable? Discuss.
6. How does the Christian exercise self-control in things that are intrinsically wrong?
7. What is meant by the words "lawful things"?
8. Discuss some circumstances under which a Christian should abstain from certain lawful things.
9. Discuss the importance and meaning of moderation in lawful things.
10. In submission to the power of the indwelling Christ are you giving diligence to the exercise of self-control in all things, maintaining control of both body and mind? Are you abstaining from every form of evil? Are you abstaining from certain lawful things when circumstances demand it? Are you exercising moderation in lawful things? Are you the master or servant of your desires and propensities?

PATIENCE

"In your self-control *patience*." We now come to the fourth of the graces of Christian personality enumerated by Peter: *patience*. The Greek word translated as patience is *hupomone*, literally meaning "remaining behind," or "remaining in the house." It is generally defined by lexicographers as conveying the ideas of endurance, perseverance, a holding out, enduring affliction, a bearing up under, steadfastness, constancy, and a patient, steadfast waiting for.

Nature of Earthly Life

These definitions impress on our minds that the grace of patience is necessary for Christian living because of the nature of life in this world. Were this life all cozy, all perfect, all sinless, with all troubles and problems nonexistent, there would be no need of patience, any more than of moral courage. But the testimony of God's word, confirmed by the experience of every Christian who ever lived, declares that the Christian's earthly existence is one of subjection to manifold tribulations, both physical and moral: pain, want, disease, death, error, temptation, persecution, etc.; thus the need of patience, or perseverance, in continuing to live for Christ. "In the world ye have tribulation" (John 16:33). ". . . through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

The Christian finds himself in a great entanglement. There are factors, part and parcel of the dominating tensions of life, that would increase the difficulty of living to the breaking point. The Christian must live with these stresses and get the best of them. He must patiently endure them for the sake of Christ and for the welfare of his soul. The abundant life in Christ does not come from running away from life—from its sorrows, its struggles, its hopes. The Christian who above all wants to avoid risk and danger and suffering sets out no welcome to the riches of Christian living.

Patience, Virtue, and Self-control

As virtue, or moral courage, is indispensable to a faith that will not falter in the face of the possibilities of temptation, persecution, and tribulation, so patience is indispensable to a faith that will not falter when these possibilities have become realities. The close connection between virtue and patience is plainly evident. One who does not have the courage to face the dangers of evil and trouble with the intent of conquering them in the power of Christ, will hardly have the moral stamina to persevere when sorrow, pain, temptation, and tribulation actually come upon him.

We also note the close connection between self-control and patience. "No less obvious is the connection between self-control and its other neighbor *patience*. 'Furnish in self-control, patience, or, a steadfast endurance under whatever persecutions.' In this quality a passionate, or effeminate, licentious person is sure to be found deficient; whereas he who can best withstand the allurements and solicitations of all that is earthly and sensual, is the likeliest to face without flinching the opposition of the world, the assaults of Satan and his emissaries, the tongue of slander, or the tyrant's sword. It is not that he will not feel the pressure of the cross, but that with his mind undistracted, and his spiritual fibres unrelaxed, he is able to bear it. And then again, the bearing of it confirms, while it illustrates, his self-control, according to the word of the Lord, Luke 21:19" (John Lillie).

We note that although self-control and patience are interdependent, they also are quite different in meaning. Self-control is the grace of holding back; patience is the grace of holding on. The one holds back when there is temptation to be self-indulgent; the other holds on when disappointments, vexations, and annoyances threaten to move the Christian from the way of righteousness.

The Negative Side of Patience

Before we further discuss the positive side of patience, it is well that we consider its negative side.

It is not stoical apathy, a mere gritting of the teeth and setting of the nerves against the harshness of life.

It is not indifference to the problems and troubles of life, a passive resignation to our lot in a sinful world. The truly patient Christian does indeed care what happens to himself and others. He is deeply concerned about the troubles that beset mankind. The care-nothing spirit is not genuine Christian patience.

It is not borrowing trouble. The faithful Christian realizes that he has enough troubles to bear in the normal course of serving God and living in a sin beset world without seeking additional ones. He does not have a "chip on the shoulder" attitude, as if to say to the world, "Since I am a loyal Christian, serving the Lord, I dare you to persecute me."

It is not steadfastness or perseverance in bearing criticism or persecution that results from wrongdoing. "For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20). When we are reproached and persecuted for evil speaking or evil doing, it is easy to rationalize our predicament by the false claim that we so suffer because of our loyalty to Christ. In actuality, we have gotten what we justly deserve, and patience in the service of Christ has nothing to do with it.

Self-righteous preachers who insult members of their audiences, who

are sarcastic, caustic, and boorish in their preaching, make themselves doubly obnoxious by claiming that the criticism they receive for such preaching is due to the resentment of people toward the truth.

Submission To the Will of God

Someone has given the following definition of patience: "Calm endurance of tribulation, whether moral or physical, for the sake of God." The Christian is exhorted to be "patient in tribulation" (Romans 12:12). This he obeys for the sake of Him whose disciple he is. Jesus said to the church at Ephesus, "Thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary" (Revelation 2:3). The faithful Christian calmly endures tribulation without murmuring and without questioning the wisdom of God because the main element in the grace of patience is submission to the will of God. Patience assumes a trustful acceptance of the sum total of God's righteous plans and purposes for His children.

We see this spirit of submission in tribulation to the will of God in Paul's utterance, ". . . but in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings" (2 Corinthians 6:4,5).

The Christian who would impregnate his personality with the grace of patience must indeed have a faith in the integrity of God that nothing happens to him that God does not permit. He must believe that "God's hand is in it all." He must believe that however adverse to his human desires the tribulations of life may be, they are entirely consistent with the justice, wisdom, love, and goodness of the heavenly Father. He must believe that the tribulations that come upon him are not the dispensation of a cruel tyrant to make him suffer just for the sake of suffering, but that the loving Father permits them for his *good*, and *only* for his good. "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproved of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:5,6). "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). "And he [the Lord] hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

Rejoicing in Tribulations

Once the Christian is convinced that the tribulations that come upon him are for his good, he will actually rejoice in them, or as Paul expresses it, "take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, etc." His patience

will express itself in an optimistic outlook on life. He will not wear his troubles and sorrows on his sleeve. He will never assume a whining attitude toward the troubles he endures. He will "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4), no matter how great the pressures that bear upon him.

"We also rejoice in our tribulations" (Romans 5:3). "Strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy" (Colossians 1:11). "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12,13).

Perseverance in Well-doing

It is faith exposed to the hardships of life that develops patience, and it is patience that keeps the Christian serving God at all times, in the face of all disappointments, delays, temptations, and troubles. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2,3). "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1,2). "Here is the patience of the saints, that they keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

If one does not keep a careful watch over his faith, he will find it easy to become impatient with himself over the seemingly slow progress he is making in the development of Christian personality. Such disappointment concerning one's spiritual progress can lead to a "what's the use" kind of attitude that will stop all growth toward the stature of Christ. Rome was not built in a day, and neither is a well-rounded, mature Christian personality. In spite of all the obstacles and temptations that stand in the way of personal improvement, the Christian must day by day become more and more like his Master.

Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr. has aptly observed, "We must be patient even if progress is not as rapid or great as we might desire. We must not despair if spiritual growth is not miraculous. Mutually, we must keep on toward a desired goal—patience demonstrated—in prayer, study, discussion and periodic evaluation and re-dedication to become more like our Lord Jesus."

If one does not keep a careful watch over his faith, he will also find it easy to become impatient with the seemingly slow progress he is making in influencing others to come to Christ. He will face the heartbreaking reality of both strong opposition and cold indifference to his work on

behalf of Christ. But he must constantly pray that discouragement will never swerve him from the shining purpose of laboring to lead souls to Christ. The Christian is never responsible to God for the results of his work in reaching souls with the gospel message, but only for the work itself. "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Temporality of Tribulations

The optimism of Christian patience rejects the false notion that sorrow and pain are ultimate facts. They are only temporary, just as life on the earth is temporary.

Someone frantically rushed into Emerson's presence one day and said, "Mr. Emerson, they tell me that the world is coming to an end."

"Never mind," replied Emerson. "We can get along without it."

Yea, verily, the Christian can well get along without the world. He knows that it is not his eternal abiding place. He calmly endures the stresses and strains of his earthly existence because his faith is pointed heavenward and his hope, or confident desire and expectancy, is to inherit life in the realm of eternal day. "For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:24,25).

"Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). See Acts 14:22; Romans 5:3,4; 2 Thessalonians 1:4,5; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5-9; 2 Peter 3:13,14.

Example of Christ

Immediately after the inspired writer exhorts us to "run with patience the race that is set before us," he commands that we look unto Jesus Christ, the perfect example of patience: "looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1,2).

A most appropriate prophetic description of Christ as the universal burden bearer is Isaiah 53:3, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The Lord's earthly life was one of unremitting subjection to sorrow, trouble, and pain, culminated by the torment and torture of the cruel cross of Calvary. But never once did He succumb to any of the pressures that beset Him. His entire earthly existence was one continual exercise of patient endurance in all tribulation. Even when He suffered

the untold anguish of Calvary, jeered at and insulted by the onlookers, He refused to become petulant and impatient. He kept His perfect composure to the very last breath. His perfect patience eloquently declares that He never lost sight of His responsibility to do His Father's will and of the heavenly joy that lay beyond Calvary and the tomb.

If we would develop the grace of patience, we must constantly strive with God's help to emulate Christ's example of perfect patience. "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Questions

1. Define the word "patience" from the Greek *hupomone*.
2. What do actual experience and the testimony of God's word declare concerning the Christian's existence in a world of sin?
3. Discuss the close connection between virtue and patience; also between self-control and patience.
4. What are some of the negative aspects of patience?
5. Why is submission to the will of God so important in the development of patience?
6. Why is patience necessary for fruit bearing?
7. Why does the faithful Christian rejoice in his tribulations?
8. Discuss the statement, "our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."
9. Why was Jesus portrayed as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"?
10. Discuss the perfect patience of Jesus as an example for the Christian.
11. With God's help are you developing the grace of patience, each day becoming more steadfast in faith and more persevering in well-doing? Are you calmly enduring all the difficulties of life in yielding yourself to the perfect wisdom of God? Are you constantly cherishing the vision of your heavenly goal? Are you unceasingly praying to God for His strength to endure to the end of your earthly life, thus to inherit eternal life?

GODLINESS

"In your patience *godliness*." The Greek word *eusebeia*, here translated as godliness, is used in the New Testament to denote that reverence or respect for God which is the sincere feeling of the heart in view of His nature and character. A form of the word is used in Acts 10:2 to describe the Roman centurion as "a devout man." The prevailing use of *eusebeia* in the classical period gives to it the same meaning. For example, Plato, Thucydides, and Demosthenes use it to express veneration toward the Deity.

In our text, it is definite that *eusebeia* does not mean godlikeness, a moral resemblance to God. The very fact that it is presented as one of the many graces is proof that it is not intended to embrace the various moral attributes of God. The practice of the other graces makes us *godlike*, but *godliness* must be something more than this. Perhaps a better word for godliness would be *god-ward-ness*, a state of mind which accepts God as the sole object of its adoration and reverential respect, the central object of its trust, and the infallible source of all religious responsibility.

The apostle Paul has in view this internal spiritual quality of godliness, god-ward-ness, when he writes in 1 Timothy 6:11, "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." We notice that godliness is distinguished from righteousness. The latter, as it stands in the catalogue of Christian attributes, denotes godlike action; the former designates the grounds of that action.

We must see that although one who possesses the grace of godliness will live a godlike or moral life, it is possible for a person to be nominally moral without possessing godliness. Haven't we all known people who had a sense of decency about them, but who professed no faith in a higher power? Their morality is devoid of spirituality; thus it cannot be classified as *Christian* morality. They recognize some need of submission to moral law, but they fail to recognize and reverence the author of such law.

The truly religious person, one who possesses godliness, obeys moral law because of his respect and reverence for its divine giver. He is moral because he is religious, because his life is bound to God by faith and love. His attitude of godliness is not a sentimental, maudlin religiosity, or piety, but a strong awareness of the God-relatedness of all life. It is that attitude which sees the true meaning of life in its relation to God. It is that attitude which reverently and gratefully senses the constant presence of God in the Christian's earthly existence. One who possesses godliness has truly heeded the divine command, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord" (1 Peter 3:15).

True godliness is dynamic, not static. It can never exist in a vacuum

of inactivity. A spiritually empty life is an irreverent life. Paul speaks of those who are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:4,5). A superficial show of piety can never be a substitute for the dynamic respect for God's power and goodness that results in a godlike life. "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28).

Reverence for God is inseparable from reverence for His holy name. In teaching his disciples to pray, Jesus commanded them, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, *Hallowed be thy name*" (Matthew 6:9). Psalm 111:9 affirms, "Holy and reverend is his name." Irreverent speech, or profanity, is always expressive of an irreverent heart. The Christian who reverences God in his heart will never be irreverent in his speech. He will never be guilty of taking the high and holy name of God in vain. See Matthew 12:34-37.

Relationship of Godliness to Other Graces

Peter states that godliness is to be supplied in patience. This indicates that the incentive to patience is definitely religious. It is not merely a dogged determination to hold on, but a steadfastness incited by the sense of the divine purpose running through the trials of life. The basis of patience is to be the holy reverence the Christian has for God. Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). His patience was not a purposeless stubbornness, or tenacity, in the face of persecution, but a steadfastness inspired by the sense of God's righteous and wise purpose concerning him.

Indeed, the graces of virtue, knowledge, and self-control, as well as of patience, must be hallowed and inspired by godliness, so that the thought of God is brought into them all, so that they begin and end with God. Even faith, which lies at the base of the structure of Christian personality, must be hallowed by reverence for God or it will be sterile and lifeless. It must bring the Christian into reverential communion with God in Christ. It must constantly refer all his actions to God.

The Christian who possesses godliness cannot be self-inflated in his virtue, knowledge, self-control, and patience. These graces are present in his life and meaningful to him because his life is hid with Christ in God. To God belongs all the glory for his godlike life. He can sincerely speak the words of 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am."

Referring to the place of godliness in the development of Christian personality, James Hastings wrote, "It is not one of the earliest graces; it comes in after much progress has been described. There is profound significance in this. In the beginning of the Christian life, men are almost sure to be prayerful. The 'exceeding great and precious promises' are

in their hearts; the strain of penitence drives them to God; personal imperfection is bitterly felt, and they are compelled to pray for the grace to live a better life. But when they have reached somewhat of excellency; when their will is disciplined, and pure desires are theirs; when they are home in the study of the gospel; there is great danger of suffering from undevoutness. Gradually a change is evident; their heart grows hard, self-consciousness and pride destroy the sweetness of their life. For want of heavenly motive they are impatient; for want of heavenly aim they are self-indulgent."

Developing Godliness

The Christian is commanded, "Exercise thyself unto godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7). The Greek for the phrase "exercise thyself" originally referred to the undergoing of training in a gymnasium. Paul's idea is that in order to attain unto godliness, we must be spiritual gymnasts, willing to undergo as rigorous a program of training as the athlete who trained himself to win the ivy at the Isthmian games or the garland of wild olives at the Olympic games. And how infinitely more important godliness is than physical exercise! "For bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

The very fact that one is seriously concerned about developing reverence toward God is indicative that he already possesses a measure of it. In fact, one would not be a Christian in the first place were he totally lacking in reverence for God. But what the faithful Christian desires is a greater realization of God's presence in his life, a deeper sense of His majesty, holiness, and power. He will accomplish this as he devotes himself to the following:

1. *Bible Study.* It is obvious that no one can seriously study the Bible with the intent of developing reverence for God without expressing some reverence in his approach to this study. But in the study itself there will be realized a fuller and greater knowledge of God's nature, which knowledge is indispensable to the development of reverence.

It is entirely incongruous that one should have reverence for God without knowing His nature. The Christian, then, should not only be concerned about the *book* of God, the Bible, but also about the *God* of the Bible. He should not only be concerned about the *will* of God, but also about the *God* who has revealed His will to men. And the more he learns about God Himself, the more godliness he will be able to incorporate in his personality.

In his study of the Bible, the Christian will deepen his understanding of the nature of God, who is portrayed as the Creator (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11), eternal (Genesis 21:33), holy (John 17:11), infinite (1 Kings 8:27), just (Genesis 18:25; 1 Peter 1:17), living and true (Jer-

emiah 10:10; Acts 14:15), omnipotent (Genesis 1:3; Jeremiah 32:17), omnipresent (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:27), omniscient (1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 10:29), Spirit (John 4:24; Colossians 1:15), supreme (Romans 9:5-23; 1 Timothy 6:15), unchangeable (Isaiah 46:10, Malachi 3:6), wisdom (Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 3:19), compassionate (Romans 9:15), love (1 John 4:8), gracious (Exodus 34:6), light (1 John 1:5), perfect (Matthew 5:48), etc.

In seeking to deepen his knowledge of God's nature, the Christian will become acquainted with all the attributes of Jesus Christ, Immanuel, "God with us." Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). 1 Corinthians 1:24 declares, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

To develop reverence toward Christ, and thus toward God, the Christian must learn of the mind, or attitude, of Christ. He is exhorted, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Cf. Matthew 11:29.

2. *Meditation.* It is not sufficient alone to learn facts about God; the Christian must also meditate on these facts. If he would develop godliness, he must *think* about God. He must ponder the riches of His grace and goodness and the majesty of His being. "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Cf. Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:8.

The more the Christian seriously ponders and contemplates the nature of God, the more reverent he becomes. One who constantly sought a greater degree of reverence for God exclaimed, "I will meditate also upon all thy work, and muse on thy doings" (Psalm 77:12).

The following passages encourage the development of godliness: "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (Psalm 4:4); "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10); "Whoso is wise will give heed to these things; and they will consider the lovingkindness of Jehovah" (Psalm 107:43).

How very much every child of God needs to spend precious moments of quietude, removed from the hustle and bustle of a hectic world, not only to meditate on God's nature as revealed in the Bible, but also to trace the goodness of His grace as it has been experienced every blessed moment in His service. The contemplation of one is just as important as the other in the development of godliness.

3. *Worship.* In worship, the Christian directly approaches the God of heaven through Jesus Christ to express both his need and his appreciation for the presence of God in his life. Worship is the paying of homage and respect to God, the prostrating of self before the throne of God's grace, the communion of the human spirit with the divine Spirit. See Matthew 4:10; John 4:24; 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 19:10.

Worship is both a means and an expression of godliness. The spirit

of godliness makes for acceptable worship, and such worship contributes to the development of godliness. It is impossible for any one to prostrate himself before the living God, to commune with the eternal, and fail to develop a sense of deep reverence for God. And it is axiomatic that the closer one draws to God in worship the more reverent he will be toward God in all the walks of life.

One of the avenues of the worship of God is *prayer*. In our zealous and often greedy desire to obtain blessings from God, we are prone to overlook the function of prayer as communion with God. In communing with God in prayer, we express adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; in so doing we express our reverential feeling for Him. But at the same time we are developing reverence, incorporating in our personality more of the grace of godliness.

What we can so easily fail to see in prayer is that the very act of speaking to God—of making direct contact with Him, or communing with Him—is of itself alone conducive to greater reverence, to a greater sense of the divine presence in the Christian's life. One cannot humbly and contritely bow his head and bend his knees in prayer, ardently pouring out his heart in praise and thanksgiving to the heavenly Father, without becoming more reverential in his feeling toward Him. See 1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 104:1; Isaiah 6:3; Ephesians 5:20; Hebrews 13:15,16; Revelation 4:11; 19:1.

Another avenue of worship that both expresses and develops godliness is the *Lord's supper*. In this communion and memorial feast, the worshiper reverently looks to the sacrifice of Calvary, expressive of God's perfect love; in so doing his reverential realization of the goodness, greatness, mercy, and love of God is greatly enhanced. See 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-26.

Another avenue of worship is *singing*. When one sincerely praises God in song, obeying the command, "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19), his heart automatically expands with a mellow feeling of reverence for God.

Then, too, in liberally and cheerfully *giving* to God of the material substance entrusted in his care, laying his gifts as it were at the feet of his loving Master, the Christian will have a greater reverence for the Giver of every good and perfect gift. See 1 Chronicles 29:10-14; Matthew 2:11; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

Taking Time to be Godly

In a society whose philosophy is crassly materialistic, in which the physical is given precedence over the spiritual, it is difficult for the Christian to devote himself in all circumstances to the development of godliness through Bible study, meditation, and worship. Beset by a thousand and one distractions, temptations, and allurements that are virtually present everywhere, it is so easy for the Christian to find himself

with neither the time nor the disposition to do what is necessary for growth in godliness. But by the exercise of his will and in reliance on God's grace, he *must* find the time and manifest the disposition to exercise himself into godliness. Bible study, meditation, and worship must become as habitual a part of his life as working, sleeping, eating, and drinking. He must as surely take time to be godly, drawing himself ever closer to God, as he does in attending to the needs of his body. For if he ever loses his reverence for God, whatever the reason may be, he will lose God Himself and so lose his immortal soul. See Isaiah 40:31.

Example of Jesus

Reverence for God was the keynote of the earthly life of Jesus. Hebrews 5:7 describes Him as possessing "godly fear." In this He was perfect, just as He was perfect in everything else. Everything He did was God-related. He had a perfect sense of the continual presence of God in His life. Every thought, every act, every utterance of His entire earthly existence was oriented toward God. In the spirit of such reverence, Jesus could say to His Father, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39); "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do" (John 17:4); "Lo, I am come to do thy will" (Hebrews 10:9). See Matthew 4:10; 11:25; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15,16.

In seeking to grow in godliness, let us ever look to the Master as the perfect example of a life filled with reverential respect for the heavenly Father.

Questions

1. What is the meaning of the Greek word *eusebeia* as it is used in the New Testament?
2. Distinguish between godliness and righteousness.
3. Discuss the connection between reverence for God and reverence for His holy name. What does the use of profanity indicate?
4. What is the relationship of godliness to the graces that precede it in Peter's list?
5. What idea is contained in the original Greek for the expression "exercise thyself"? Discuss this idea in connection with the development of godliness.
6. Discuss ways in which the Christian can develop godliness.
7. Discuss the example of Jesus in regard to godliness.
8. Are you daily exercising yourself unto godliness, developing an increasingly greater reverence for God? Are you constantly endeavoring to relate your entire life to God so that you feel His presence at all times?

BROTHERLY KINDNESS

“In your godliness *brotherly kindness*.” The graces of godliness and brotherly kindness supplement each other. The reverence the Christian has for the divine Father can inspire him to an affectionate, loving regard for the Father’s children. But godliness must be moderated by brotherly kindness if it would be outgoing, warm, and dynamic. “Not suffering your godliness to be moroseness, nor a sudden solitary habit of life, but kind, generous and courteous” (Alford).

The Greek word for brotherly kindness is *philadelphia*, literally meaning “love of brothers.” This love is the fraternal or family affection the Christian has for his fellow Christians. It is the love that recognizes the difference between the church and the world, between the followers of Christ and the followers of the devil. It is the love that assumes between one Christian and another a common goal, a common salvation, a common faith, a common Lord and Master, a common Father, and common interests. Cf. Romans 8:16,17; 15:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; 2 Corinthians 6:17,18; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 3; etc.

Philadelphia can be used synonymously with *agape*, the last of the Christian graces; for example, “But concerning love of the brethren (*philadelphias*) ye have no need that one write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love (*agapan*) one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9). Where, however, *agape* is intended to mean something different from *philadelphia* in the love we are to have for our Christian brethren, that difference will be noted in the lesson to follow.

The feeling that comes next to the Christian’s love for God should be his love for God’s beloved children. Without love of the brethren there can be no love of God Himself. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen” (1 John 4:20). Indeed, one cannot have any assurance that he is truly converted to Christ and an heir of eternal life unless he loves his brethren. “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:14,15).

The basic importance of brotherly love is indicated in Galatians 6:10, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and *especially* toward them that are of the household of faith.” This confirms the old adage that charity begins at home.

Because love of the brethren, *philadelphia*, is so significant and because we are so apt to neglect it, God’s word often urges it upon us: “In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another” (Romans 12:10); “Let love of the brethren continue” (Hebrews 13:1); “Seeing

ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). See Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:6; Philimon 1:5; 1 Peter 2:17; 3:8.

No Distinctions

In love of the brethren there must be no distinctions. It is to be a love without partiality. God shows no partiality in His love for His children, and neither must we. Every man who has come to Christ is a precious Christian brother, regardless of who he may be—poor man, rich man, educated man, uneducated man, black man, white man, etc. Beloved of his Father, he must be beloved of his brethren. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). ". . . there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

The Bond of Unity

Love is the only real bond of unity in the church of Christ. True, the members of the Lord's body are bound together by the tacit agreement that they will walk together in the teaching of the New Testament. But love is the essence of this agreement, its vital element. Many in the church hold to the error that the unity pleasing to God is limited to a few externals of worship and practice that the brethren agree upon. They overlook the one vital element in unity: *love*. They fail to see that any agreement between brethren without love is hollow mockery.

For example, it is possible for a man and woman to be lawfully married to each other, living together in the same house, eating together, sleeping together, viewing television together—being together in a thousand and one things, so to speak—and yet day after day quarreling and bickering, with intense hatred in their hearts for each other. Is this a picture of genuine marital unity and harmony?

So it is also that brethren in Christ can come together in the same building, engage in the same acts of worship, invoke the blessings of the same God, and yet "bite and devour one another" (Galatians 5:15), hating rather than loving each other. Can they rightfully boast of being unified just because they are in agreement as to some phases of the religion of Christ?

Certainly, all members of the body of Christ must strive to obey 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). See John 17:20,21; Romans 15:5,6. Unless, however, this unity of which Paul speaks has in it the vital element of brotherly kindness, it can never be

more than a superficial thing devoid of the spirit of true Christian brotherhood.

The standard of unity set forth in God's word is perfect, even as the unity of the Father and Son is perfect; but the practice of unity in the church is imperfect, even as every other ethical principle is imperfect in human life. But what God expects of His children is progress and growth in unity. This is only possible as love exists among the brethren. Love is the climate in which unity thrives and grows. The loving Christian is never satisfied with any disagreement between himself and his brethren in Christ. He hates all enmity and strife in the family of God. He is willing, ready, and able at all times to discuss in the spirit of Christian fellowship any and all differences that separate him from his brethren. He keeps the door open at all times for the honorable, objective airing of all difficulties that arise between him and his fellow Christians. He recognizes that there are scriptural grounds for withdrawing of fellowship from recalcitrant, persistently disobedient disciples, but *the goal for which he constantly labors is fellowship, not disfellowship* (Galatians 6:1).

Thus the unity that he labors to establish between himself and his brethren is much more than a superficial agreement concerning a few religious doctrines and externals of worship; it is a unity that binds him to his brethren in sweet, loving, tender, compassionate, forbearing Christian fellowship. And isn't this the same unity that binds a husband and wife together in the love that makes for a happy home? How much more important it is that this spirit of unity should prevail in the infinitely more precious family of God.

Consider what should be the loving fellowship of members of the body of Christ as symbolized by man's physical body: ". . . but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (1 Corinthians 12:24-27).

Each member of a man's physical body is solicitous for the welfare of all the other members. Each member shares in the suffering and honor that come to the other members. Being mutually dependent, they work together in accord and harmony.

This is essentially the same relationship of the members of the body of Christ when brotherly kindness prevails. Loving members of the body of Christ do indeed "care one for another." They are sincerely interested in the welfare of their Christian brethren and in the work and worship divinely ordained for the church. Because they care one for another, they attend the services, *all the services*, of the local congregation, to enjoy the sweet fellowship of each other in the worship of God and in mutual

edification. Because they care one for another, they seek the company of each other throughout the week. Because they care one for another, they visit their sick brethren to give them sympathy and encouragement. Because they care one for another, they extend a helping hand to the poor and needy among them. Because they care one for another, when one suffers they all suffer, when one rejoices they all rejoice. Because they care one for another, they willingly sacrifice of themselves, of their time, of their material means—of anything and everything at their command—to benefit their fellow Christians and to cooperate with them in the work Christ has enjoined on His followers.

Say what you will about the attitude of the member of the body of Christ who shares little of his life with his brethren, it is undeniable that he possesses little brotherly kindness, little of the spirit of Christian fellowship. He does not find the time to be with his brethren, whether in social fellowship or in the fellowship of public worship, because he has little or no care for them. They are just not very important to him. Whether they suffer or rejoice, it is of little concern to him. The lack of love and regard he has for the disciples of Christ reflects the lack of love and regard he has for Christ Himself.

The Proof of Discipleship

Jesus declared, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Love of the brethren is the proof of discipleship, the only valid means of the world knowing who the genuine followers of Christ are. In our religious self-centeredness and egotism, however, we attempt to prove to the world that we are *the* church, true followers of Christ, by appealing to the soundness of our teaching and scripturality of our worship and practice. But how very prone we are to overlook the one great criterion of discipleship laid down by Jesus: *brotherly love*. "He that loveth not abideth in death" (1 John 3:14). Any person who abides in death can hardly prove to the world that he is a disciple of Christ.

Robert C. Copeland, Jr. said, "On the vast plains of Texas are some of the largest ranches in the nation. Each ranch has an owner, and each owner has his own brand which identifies his cattle. The brand is his exclusive mark of ownership.

"When one is born anew into the kingdom of God, he is identified as a disciple, a Christian. Long ago Jesus Christ put his brand on his disciples. He stated that men would know his disciples by the mark called *brotherly love*. This is the greatest brand of identification in the world."

Proof of discipleship cannot be merely a verbal affirmation of brotherly love; it must be brotherly love *demonstrated*. The world cannot tell that we love one another merely because we say we do, but by our actions. Thus we are commanded, "My little children, let us not love in word,

neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). When we treat each other with kindness, benevolence, courtesy and consideration, abiding by the golden rule in all our relationships with our Christian brethren, we eloquently declare to the world that we do indeed love one another, and that we are thus true disciples of Christ.

Example of the Early Church

The grace of brotherly kindness was widely demonstrated in the early church. It was said of the disciples in Jerusalem that they "continued stedfastly . . . in fellowship," that they "were together, and had all things common," that they "were of one heart and soul" and that "neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them . . . and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need." See Acts 2:42,44; 4:32;34,35. This demonstration of such great brotherly kindness resulted in the Jerusalem disciples enjoying "favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47).

Augustus Neander, the great church historian, wrote, "That which our Lord himself, in his last interview with his disciples, described as the test by which his disciples might be distinguished, —as the mark of their fellowship with him and the Father in heaven, the mark of his glory dwelling in the midst of them, —namely that they loved one another, —precisely this constituted the prominent mark, *plain and striking to the pagans themselves*, of the first Christian fellowship . . . The distinguished virtues of the Christians must have shone forth more brightly, as contrasted with the prevailing vices; their severity in morals, sometimes even carried to excess, as opposed to the general depravation of the age; *their hearty fraternal love*, in contrast with the predominant selfishness which separated man from man, and rendered each distrustful of the other . . . 'See,'—was the common remark,—'how they love one another.' 'This seems so extraordinary to them,'—says Tertullian—'because they are used to hate one another. See how among the Christians, one is ready to die for the others; this seems so wonderful to them, because they themselves are far more ready to murder one another.'"

Every Christian should constantly strive and pray to the end that the present day church will extensively demonstrate to the world the power and beauty of the grace of brotherly kindness.

Example of Christ

Christians are inspired to love each other by the example of Christ's love for them. "A new commandment I give unto you," said the Lord, "that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Cf. John 13:1; Ephesians 5:2.

The Lord, after His beautifully symbolic act of washing His disciples' feet, expressed to them the working principle which this act of con-

descending love was meant to convey, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:12-15). Do we possess such a love for our brethren that we are willing to render them the most humble kind of service when needed?

The Lord's love for His disciples expressed itself in the fullest measure of devotion to them. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Do we so love our brethren?

Questions

1. What contribution do godliness and brotherly kindness make to each other?
2. What is the literal meaning of *philadelphia*, the Greek word rendered as brotherly kindness? Discuss the peculiar meaning of the love we are to have for our brethren in Christ.
3. Why is it impossible for us to love God if we do not love our brethren?
4. Why is genuine love of the brethren impartial, showing no distinctions among them?
5. Discuss the axiom that brotherly love is the only real bond of unity in the church.
6. Describe the spirit of fellowship which is the essence of brotherly love.
7. Why is love of the brethren the valid proof of discipleship?
8. Discuss the spirit of brotherly love that was widespread in the early church.
9. What kind of example has Christ given us in His love for His disciples?
10. Do you sincerely love your Christian brethren? Are you striving to enjoy the fullest possible fellowship with them? Are you closely bound to them by a love that shows solicitous care for them, that rejoices when they rejoice and weeps when they weep, that always seeks harmony and unity among them, that sacrifices for them of self, of time, of money—in short, a love that essentially exemplifies the love of Christ?

LOVE

“In your brotherly kindness *love*.” Love here, from the Greek *agape*, signifies active good will toward mankind in general: love of humanity, of all mankind, as distinct from and in addition to the peculiar affection for brethren in Christ. Lest brotherly kindness, or love of the brotherhood, should become insulated and degenerate into a selfish, narrow, exclusive sentiment, Peter directs us to possess the love that embraces all mankind.

The *agape* is the love that gives full recognition to the common humanity of all men, irrespective of class, creed, nationality, or circumstances. It is the love that gives full recognition to all men as the common offspring of God. It is the love we are to have for men not because of any pleasure they may afford us, not because we may like them or agree with them, but because they are *men*, human beings, made in the image of God. It is the love which we must possess to be God’s true spiritual children, for it reflects the all-inclusive love of God. “Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust” (Matthew 5:43-45).

The *agape* is the love for men as persons that gave the cross its significance. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “But God commandeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). How can any Christian soberly contemplate God’s perfect love manifested at Calvary and fail to respond in love for all men?

The *agape* is logically and naturally the complete crown of the Christian graces, the real and final thing, the ultimate fruitage of faith, because it reflects the very nature of God, who is *love* (1 John 4:8). Love is indeed the “bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14).

He who truly loves all men because they are persons and precious in the sight of God, will always labor to serve them, to do them good and never evil, even as God’s love for them is always expressed in solicitude for their welfare. Cf. Luke 10:25-37; Romans 13:8-10.

The New Testament Psalm of Love

No more complete and beautiful description of the *agape*, love, can be found in the sacred scriptures than in the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, called the New Testament psalm of love: “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding

brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth . . . But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: and the greatest of these is love" (verses 1-8, 13).

Paul begins his discussion of the *agape* by affirming that a life without love is *nothing*, that any good in itself that a person knows, says, or does is vain and futile unless it is prompted by love. "Let all that ye do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). Cf. John 14:15; Galatians 5:6; 1 John 5:3.

Love suffereth long. The Greek for "suffereth long" denotes the power "to hold the mind long." Love is patient toward all men in all their weaknesses, foibles, and failures because they are *men*, human beings, weak and frail in the flesh, constantly subjected to temptation. Thus it endures under provocation of evil from others. Cf. Matthew 18:21,22. "Love suffers long because it has a Christian sense of values. It knows that there is no greater tragedy than the loss of a soul and it knows that abandoned souls can only be lost! . . . We must not give up. We must not abandon them to be forever lost. Love must suffer long" (J. Harold Thomas).

Is kind. This is the positive side of love. Love not only endures under provocation and persecution from others, but it also extends good to all men, whether friend or foe, in a gentle and amiable spirit. "And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all" (2 Timothy 2:24). "But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head" (Romans 12:20). See Ephesians 4:32; James 3:17. "Love is the river of life in this world. Among the evergreen trees growing upon its bank is the fruit tree of kindness" (Frank Winters).

Love envieth not. Love is entirely incompatible with envy. The former is solicitous for the prosperity, success, and happiness of others; the latter resents others because of the good things they enjoy. Love is unselfish, envy is selfish. When one loves others as himself, he is not grieved at the blessings they receive, but rejoices as if they were his own.

All through the Bible we see the tragedy of lives poisoned by the unlovingness of envy. Joseph was hated of his brethren because he was beloved of his father, and because his dream made him their superior. Haman was full of bitter resentment toward Mordecai because he held a high place in the favor of king Ahasuerus. The wrath of Saul was

inflamed against David because of the favor he received from the people. Certain members of the Corinthian church were envious of their brethren who seemingly had more desirable spiritual gifts than they.

Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. To vaunt is to boast, to make an ostentatious display of one's achievements. In so doing, it ostensibly minimizes the achievements of others. Vaunting is the language of pride. Humility is the language of love. When we love someone we never make his accomplishments look unfavorable or unimportant in comparison with our own. Love never does good in order to praise self but rather to serve others and glorify God. See Matthew 6:1; Acts 8:9.

The phrase "puffed up" describes the egocentric, vainglorious attitude toward self that produces vaunting, or boasting. Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6. One boasts of himself because he is inflated with a sense of his own importance. But love causes a person "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). When we love others we recognize that they possess as much worth as persons, human beings, as we. Cf. Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 2:17.

Doth not behave itself unseemly. Egocentric self-love betrays its lack of concern for others by bad manners, and does not care how offensive its conduct is to others. But the love of which Paul speaks is never rude or deliberately offensive to any; it always pays attention to propriety. "Love inspires a disposition to please and leads to that propriety of conduct which is so beautiful in itself and so acceptable to mankind. It is always unwilling to give offence, and leads us studiously to avoid, both in conduct and speech, whatever may seem unbecoming to ourselves and offensive to others. It introduces civility into conversation, and guards against harshness and indelicacy of expression which are inconsistent with good manners, and hurt the feelings of mankind. It restrains a petulant disposition of mind, and permits not men to take freedoms which are impertinent and disrespectful to those around them" (A. Donnan).

Seeketh not its own. Love is unselfish. This does not mean, however, that it is unconcerned about self. Surely, the Christian must be concerned about his own welfare, but not to the exclusion of concern about the welfare of others. There is a great difference between self-interest and selfishness. The person who is genuinely interested in securing the manifold blessings of God for himself will also be interested in making these blessings possible for others.

The unselfish spirit of true love is expressed in the following passages: "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good . . . Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:24,32,33); "Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of

you also to the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). See Romans 15:1-3.

"The extent to which we become godlike can be seen by the degree to which we become unselfish. The self-sacrifice and unselfish service of the world's greatest missionary, Paul, were wonderful. It was the impelling demands of Christian love which led him to give himself so freely. The love of God which reached down in mercy to save the chief of sinners motivated him to extend himself in his efforts to share God's blessings with sinners like himself" (F. W. Mattox).

Is not provoked. Love does not lose its temper; it is not irritable, sour, or bitter. This does not mean, however, that the loving Christian is not to be moved at the sight of sin. No one will labor to lead men to Christ who is not provoked when he sees the devastating effects of sin on humanity. It is said of Paul while he was at Athens that "his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols" (Acts 17:16). If he had not been moved by the sight of idolatry, he would not have taken a militant stand against it.

But being moved at the sight of sin should at the same moment move us to pray for the sinner, and to have pity for his unhappy plight. True love always distinguishes between the sinner and his sins. It will never express itself in a bitter, resentful spirit toward any man. It will never cause the Christian to lose his temper and unduly berate those who have wronged him. See Proverbs 16:32; Ephesians 4:26-32; Colossians 3:8; James 1:19,20.

Taketh not account of evil. Love suspects no evil. It believes no evil where no evil seems. It never concludes that a good action can have a bad motive. "Love thinks good, but hatred thinks evil. Hatred looks for hidden and evil motives behind even the good which we may do. Hatred causes an individual to misconstrue what we say and give the worst possible meaning to our declarations. Hatred causes one to find bad when we only intended good" (George H. Stephenson).

Love will not listen for a moment to mere supposition and rumor, and it turns away with abhorrence from the whisperings of the talebearer. Only on the basis of reliable evidence will it believe evil of another, and it accepts the fact with sincere reluctance.

Love does not plan or devise evil. It does not keep an account of the evil which it suffers from others with the intent of some day paying them off in full. See Romans 12:19; 13:10.

Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness. The truly loving Christian does not rejoice when he hears that any man has fallen into sin. He rather feels deep compassion for him, and prays and labors for his repentance, knowing that his soul is in peril of eternal death. Nothing can be more devilish, more utterly hateful, than to feel satisfaction upon hearing of the iniquity of another. To so feel is to share in the joy of Satan, to be glad at that which our Lord hates and abhors. "Love does not take delight in rejoicing in a man's evil reputations, though it condemns his sinful

ways. A Christian can stand up for the truth and show that he is opposed to all forms of iniquity without gloating over a sinner's misfortune" (Fred B. Walker).

But rejoiceth with the truth. Love shares the joy of truth's triumph over evil in any person. The contrast between "unrighteousness" and "truth" shows the inseparable connection between true principles and right conduct. Walking in truth is equivalent to walking in righteousness. See John 3:20,21; 2 John 4.

Beareth all things. The Greek word for "beareth" is *stego*. It has the meaning of covering over for the purpose of shelter. A literal rendering of the phrase "beareth all things" is "covereth all things." Weymouth renders it as "knows how to be silent," and Moffatt's rendering is "always slow to expose." Cf. 1 Peter 4:8. Whatever evil the lover of mankind sees, hears, or knows of anyone, he mentions it to none. It never goes out of his lips, unless absolute duty and good conscience demand it. It is evident that gossips, slanderers, backbiters, and talebearers are always unloving people.

Believeth all things. Love is not credulous, without the ability to see any wrong in a person's life. But it does believe all the good it can about anyone. It always looks on the bright side of men's character. As George W. Bailey observed, "Love has much grace but no suspicion." Love puts the best possible construction on the conduct of others. It believes that they are actuated by good motives and that they intend no injury or wrong.

Hopeth all things. When the evidence is certain that someone has sinned, love hopefully anticipates his repentance. It entertains hopes concerning even the worst of transgressors because it believes in the possibilities for good of all men and because it knows the love of God for sinners and the power of His grace.

Endureth all things. This characteristic of love is similar to that of "suffereth long." Here the emphasis is on "all things." True love has the capacity to endure in a patient spirit any and all the wrongs of others. When we truly love another, we will continue to work for his good no matter how much evil we may suffer at his hands. For love, as God Himself, is always more powerful than evil. Indeed, "love never faileth."

Example of Jesus

Jesus, being "Immanuel . . . God with us" (Matthew 1:23), exemplified the perfect love of God during His earthly ministry. He who came to bless and serve men, to give them abundance of life, envied no man. His was a life of perfect humility, completely devoid of a vaunting and egocentric spirit. Never did he behave Himself unseemly nor do anything motivated by selfishness. He could be moved to indignation by the hardness of men's hearts and the sins of the world, but not once did He

lose control of His temper. He intensely hated sin and just as intensely loved the sinner. He always saw the best in people—whether publicans, harlots, or sinners in general—always believing in their possibilities for good. He never harbored resentment in His heart toward any man. Never once did He retaliate for any evil done Him, not even when He suffered the torment and torture of Calvary. He took no pleasure or joy at the sight of evil, only pain and sorrow. He rejoiced with truth in its every triumph and victory. His was indeed a love that bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things, and endured all things. He was the perfect lover of all mankind, the perfect example of the greatest thing in the world, *love*. See Matthew 20:28; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:19; 5:2,25; Revelation 1:5.

Questions

1. What is the meaning of the Greek word *agape*?
2. Why is love placed last in the list of Christian graces?
3. Discuss I Corinthians 13:1-3.
4. Discuss the long-suffering and kindness of love.
5. Why is envy incompatible with love?
6. What attitude toward self and others does a vaunting spirit express?
7. Discuss the seemliness and unselfishness of love.
8. How can one be provoked at the sight of sin and yet continue to love the sinner?
9. Discuss the characteristics of love as taking no account of evil, rejoicing not in unrighteousness but with the truth, bearing all things, hoping all things, and enduring all things.
10. Discuss the example of the love for all mankind given us by Christ.
11. What is your attitude toward all men, irrespective of class, creed, nationality, or circumstances? Are you constantly growing in the love that embraces all mankind?

HE THAT LACKETH THESE THINGS

“For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins” (2 Peter 1:8,9).

The contrast drawn in these two verses is between the person who abounds in the Christian graces and the one who lacks them. The apostle plainly sets forth the reason for their deficiency in any Christian: he has “forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.” The reference here is to the person who at one time came to Christ in trusting faith seeking the remission of sins, which he actually received by the power of Christ’s blood. Peter does not remotely have in mind any person who only *thought* his sins had been cleansed by Christ’s blood but who, in reality, had never really been converted to Christ. The apostle speaks of a *fact*: “Having forgotten *the cleansing from his old sins*” (one cannot forget something that never happened).

Tragic Forgetting

Having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. That is not the ultimate consequence of the spiritual deterioration in the life of a disloyal Christian; it is the primary cause. It is not the last fruitage of a life that has wandered away from Christ; it is the original root. Forget the primary blessing of Christianity, the cleansing from your old sins, and you forget the responsibilities and blessings of the Christian life. That is the plain, simple warning Peter gives us.

But in forgetting the cleansing from his old sins, the unfaithful Christian has also forgotten the basis for this great blessing: the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary. He has forgotten that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). He has forgotten that “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). He has forgotten that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). He has forgotten, “the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20). He has forgotten that “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). He has forgotten, “for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). He has forgotten that “according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5).

God! Christ! Calvary! The resurrection! The blood! Divine love!

Divine grace! Divine mercy! All these the children of God has forgotten who has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins, the result being a life that neither has the power nor the motivation for growth in Christian personality. Carefully read Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:11-15.

Such a life lacks in spiritual power because it no longer has a living, vibrant faith in Christ. Without this faith, as we discussed in a previous lesson, there is no access to *the* power for godly living, or spiritual fruit bearing: the grace of God through Christ and His indwelling Spirit. See 1 John 5:4; Mark 11:23; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 1:3; 3:14-21; Philippians 1:11; etc. But as we also previously noted, an essential element in availing faith is trust, or dependence. One who truly believes in Christ, trusts in Him for power to live the Christian life, to build Christian personality. But one who has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins, thus to forget the Saviour who made this blessing possible through His blood, has turned his back on the Lord and no longer depends on Him for power to live a holy life.

In the building of Christian personality, there must be an obedience to the divine will that flows out of faith, but faith itself cannot avail unless it is motivated by love. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). It is axiomatic that one who has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins no longer loves the source of this blessing, the divine Saviour, and so is without motivation to become like Him. Jesus declared, "If a man love me, he will keep my word. . . He that loveth me not keepeth not my words" (John 14:23,24).

Love can only motivate the Christian to holy living as it has in it the essential element of gratitude. Gratitude, someone has said, is the mother of all virtues. That is a defensible proposition. The Christian who genuinely loves Christ remembers the great blessing of the cleansing from his old sins with a deep sense of gratitude, and nothing pleases him more than to please his great Benefactor. He doesn't have to be coaxed and begged into building Christian personality. He *wants* to do this because he wants to please his Master. The grateful spirit that prompts him to humble submission to the Lord's will can be expressed in the avowal, "He has done so much for me, and I want to do so much for Him." It can also express itself in the prayer, "Lord, you gave your life for me, and now I give my life to you. By grace the great exchange is made."

The apostle Paul is an outstanding example of a life motivated by loving gratitude toward Christ. His zealous life of trust and obedience was lived in gratefully loving remembrance of the great blessing of redemption he had received through Christ. He neither forgot the cleansing from his old sins nor the Saviour who cleansed him. With a heart filled with gratitude, he exclaimed, "I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service; though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and

injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 1:12-14). See Philippians 1: 21; 2 Timothy 2:4.

The Christian who has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins is the worst kind of ingrate. He has forgotten the greatest possible blessing from the greatest possible blesser at the greatest possible cost. No one could possibly be more ungrateful than he. It is little wonder that his life is so destitute of the Christian graces.

Perhaps the most dramatic and vivid picture of the contrast between gratitude and ingratitude given in the Bible is in the narrative of the healing of the ten lepers by the miraculous power of Jesus, recorded in Luke 17:11-19. Nine of them went their ungrateful way, and only one returned to thank the Lord for the wonderful blessing he had received from Him. "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan." Then Jesus asked the penetrating question, "Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?"

Is Jesus asking concerning those who have been cleansed from their old sins: "Were not the ten cleansed? but *where are the nine?*" Can it be true that the vast majority of sinners who have been healed by the Great Physician show no gratitude toward Him in their failure to glorify God by holy living?

It is not difficult to understand why the legalistic, formalistic teaching that urges obedience upon Christians without presenting the proper motivation is so futile and ineffective. Legalism endeavors to *argue* men into doing the will of God. At its very best it can only produce a perfunctory obedience prompted by a spirit of cold duty and fear. In dealing with the spiritually impoverished Christian, it endeavors to remove the *symptoms* of a life separated from God without eradicating the *cause*. It would say to the unfaithful Christian, "It is your *duty, obligation, and responsibility* to obey the word of God by supplying in your faith virtue, and in your virtue, knowledge, etc.," but it does not point out to him the lack of faith, love, and gratitude that are the cause of his spiritual and moral destitution.

But teaching that is love-steeped, Christ-centered, and supercharged with the grace of God, would say to the unfaithful Christian, "You have forgotten the cleansing from your old sins; thus you have forgotten the loving, gracious, merciful Saviour who made this cleansing possible through His precious blood. Above all, you need to meditate on Christ, to consider His great love for you, to recall the great salvation you received from Him, and to realize that your life has gone awry because of your lack of trust in, love for, and gratitude toward Him. By such

sober meditation and reflection, and striving in prayer, you will develop the motivation that will make you *want* to submit yourself to God's will, thus to become a Christlike person." Only this kind of emphasis can effectively incite the backslider to return to the Lord and grow in Christian personality, because it is the only emphasis that can motivate him to obey the Lord's will. Cf. Romans 6:17,18; 12:1.

Of course, such emphasis does not evade the symptoms of the backsliding state, for the inspired epistles fully describe the condition of God's children who are separated from Him, plainly pointing out their specific sins. Indeed, it is necessary that God's prodigal children be rebuked and reprov'd for their sins in order to awaken them to a realization that they have wandered away from their heavenly Father.

A competent physician does not evade the symptoms of a patient's illness in discussing with him his need of medical aid. He duly warns the patient that these symptoms have been produced by a basic cause, which cause must be removed if the patient gets well. What kind of a physician would he be if he worked diligently to remove the symptoms but did nothing to remove the cause?

So it is in our work of teaching God's word to those disciples of the Lord who no longer share in His unsearchable riches. Most assuredly, they need to have their lack of the Christian graces pointed out to them as being symptomatic of their spiritual impoverishment, but, most important, they must be brought to an awareness of the lack of trust and loving gratitude that has caused this unhappy condition.

"If the new life is not delighting the eye with its inimitable grace, and filling the air with its reviving freshness, it is because there has been some untimely and disastrous arrest. The past cleansing and its Divine motive of perfect life and attainment have been overlooked and forgotten.

"The memory of grace will be a living and effectual inspiration to us at each step of our perfecting. When God first touches our spirits with His cleansing power, that act has in it the potentiality of complete Christian excellence. The sustained remembrance of your conversion will keep fresh and forceful the motive that will stimulate you to the attainment of these various moral and spiritual excellences. You might as well try to grow a cedar tree without roots as seek to cultivate these qualities without the peculiar type of motive supplied by the act of God's gracious cleansing from sin" (T. G. Selby).

Spiritual Blindness

Peter declares that the Christian who lacks the Christian graces is "blind, seeing only what is near." The expression "seeing only what is near" is from the single Greek word *muopazo*, meaning "to shut the eyes, i.e. to contract the eyelids, to blink, to twinkle, as one who cannot see clearly, and hence to be nearsighted" (Albert Barnes).

The word "myopia," the medical term for nearsightedness, is derived

from this Greek word. And the blindness of which Peter speaks is spiritual myopia, or nearsightedness. One who has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins is indeed spiritually nearsighted. He can see the temporalities of life, the small, petty, transitory things of the world. He can see the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14). But he cannot see the cleansing from his old sins, nor can he see the heavenly mansions. He cannot see the fields white unto harvest, the crying call of the Lord's work in the world. He cannot see the high calling of God in Christ Jesus in a Christlike personality.

It is axiomatic that a man never misses seeing what he cares for, what is really important to him. If he cares for temporal, earthly things, he sees temporal, earthly things. If he cares for spiritual, heavenly things, he sees spiritual, heavenly things. *And what he cares for, he seeks!* "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4). See Matthew 6:19-21,33.

In the case of the church in Laodicea, we have a striking example of those of God's children who had obviously failed to grow in the Christian graces. The record of this is given in the third chapter of Revelation. The Lord said, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and *blind* and naked" (verse 17). What was the cause of their spiritual blindness, of their miserable, poverty stricken condition? They had forgotten the cleansing from their old sins, and so they had forgotten the Saviour who cleansed them, thus shutting Him out of their lives.

But the Lord still loved them and desired their spiritual enrichment. In a passage of surpassing beauty, compassion, and tenderness, He pleaded with them to receive Him again in their lives: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (verse 20). In order to open the door here referred to, it would be necessary for these spiritually destitute souls to again take a good look at Jesus, and Him crucified, recalling the cleansing from their old sins by His precious blood, trusting in Him, gratefully loving Him, and seeking His pardon in contriteness of heart and repentance of sins.

Conclusion

It should be the constant prayer in the heart of every Christian that he will never forget the cleansing from his old sins, that in grateful remembrance of the rich blessings of God and in genuine trust in Christ, he will abound in the Christian graces, "to be not idle nor unfruitful unto

the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8).

"If we are to see clearly, if we are to behold the heavenly, to appreciate it, to be responsive to the allurements of the ideal and the eternal, our moral life must be a passionate enthusiasm, and for a passionate enthusiasm the consciousness needs to be possessed by the great energizing truths of the cleansing. Do we see the ideal and the heavenly, and does it allure? Or do we only see the things that are near? Have we forgotten the cleansing? The conditions of power remain unchanged. Let us get nearer the spring. Let us reaffirm the great cleansing. Let us startle the world with surprises of grace" (J. H. Jowett).

Questions

1. What lack does Peter refer to concerning one who has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins?
2. Name and discuss some other things that such a person has forgotten.
3. Discuss the necessity of faith and loving gratitude in the building of Christian personality.
4. Relate the story of the healing of the ten lepers and tell how it is illustrative of the contrast between gratitude and ingratitude.
5. Discuss the necessity of dealing with the cause as well as the symptoms of the backsliding state in effectively teaching God's word.
6. What does it mean to be spiritually blind, or nearsighted?
7. What was the spiritual condition of the church in Laodicea? What was the cause of this condition?
8. Do you constantly remember the cleansing from your old sins so that you have both the power and motivation to grow in the Christian graces?

MAKING IT SURE

"Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10,11).

The word "calling" is from the Greek *klesis*: "a call, calling, invitation" (Harper). The Greek word for election is *ekloge*: "election, choice; a. the act of picking out, choosing" (Thayer). Goodspeed's rendering of the phrase "calling and election" is "God's call and choice of you." When one answers the call of the gospel, accepting the gracious invitation of God through Christ, he is then elected, or chosen, by God to be His child, redeemed by the Saviour. See Matthew 22:14; 1 Corinthians 1:9; James 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

Blessed Assurance

We are commanded by Peter to give the more diligence to make our calling and election sure, to be certain that we sincerely have answered the gospel call and are God's loving, faithful children, saved by Christ. This command is predicated on the basis that we can *know* where we stand spiritually, that we can *know* whether we are truly saved and on the way to heaven. God would not ask us to do something that we are entirely incapable of doing. See 1 John 5:3.

The Christian who is acceptable to God can indeed be *sure* that he has been called out of the darkness of sin into the light of salvation. He can indeed be *sure* that he is faithful to Christ—a loving, loyal, devout child of God. He can indeed be *sure* that he is walking the upward path that leads to eternal glory. Not speculation, not conjecture, but *certainty!* That is the prerogative of the faithful Christian.

How lamentable it is that so many baptized believers never have this wonderful assurance of security and salvation in Christ. They go through life never really knowing their eternal destiny, whether hell or heaven. No wonder they feel so insecure, so fearful, so unhappy. No wonder so many of them are ready for the psychiatrist's couch.

Paul commands us: "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Surely, Paul would not command us to try and prove ourselves if it were impossible for us to know our spiritual status. But he insists that anybody who lays claim to being a follower of Christ can take a good, honest look at his heart and life and *know* if he is in the faith, if Christ is in him, or if he is reprobate and thus living without hope.

Paul *knew* where he stood in relation to Christ and eternity. He de-

clared with the greatest of confidence, "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Some other passages which affirm that we can have the assurance of our calling and election are the following: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever" (Isaiah 32:17); "And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope [in the Greek, literally, *full assurance*] even to the end" (Hebrews 6:11); "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him" (1 John 3:19); "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

The Basis for Assurance

Peter informs us how we can make our calling and election sure and thus be assured of a home in heaven: "for if you do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

If ye do these things. What things? The Christian graces: virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. The apostle here concludes that the only way we can have the assurance that we have not been called in vain and that we are truly elected by the Lord, is by the uprightness of our lives. He does not teach, however, that the grounds of our salvation, either present or future, are by our own merits, or goodness. The grounds of the spiritual life we enjoy now, and which we shall receive in the world to come, are by the merits of Christ, and *only* by His merits. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). See 1 Corinthians 15:57.

Moreover, the apostle does not teach that godly living, as such, is the access we have to the merits of Christ. It is our *faith* in Christ that makes it possible for Him to dwell in us, to keep us spiritually alive, and to give us eternal life with Him in heaven. See Galatians 2:20; 1 John 5:4; 1 Peter 1:9. But what Peter does insist upon, in keeping with the entire plan of God for the spiritual welfare of men, is that the only way we can be sure that we have genuine faith in Christ and that He truly abides in us is by our giving the more diligence to growing in the Christian graces. Anybody who fails to bear spiritual fruit cannot possibly abide in Christ, the true vine (John 15:1-6); he cannot possibly have a living faith in Him (James 2:17; Galatians 5:6).

An Honest, Candid Look

You are urged to take an honest, candid look at your life to see if you really have a living faith in Christ, if you really abide in Him, and thus if your calling and election are sure. Are you doing "these things"

of which Peter speaks, the Christian graces? Examine yourself carefully and honestly concerning each one of these graces. Are you practicing *virtue*, Christian manliness? Are you courageously standing for truth and decency in the face of all danger and peril? Are you devoting yourself to seeking after *knowledge*, to know the will of God and to have the wisdom to apply His will in your daily life? Are you endeavoring to exercise *self-control* in all things, to keep your entire being under the control of Christ? Are you exercising *patience*, or steadfastness, through all the trials and temptations of life, with the confident expectation of eventual and complete victory through Christ? Are you practicing *godliness*, or reverence toward God, continually sensing His presence in your life? Is your attitude toward your fellow Christians that of *brotherly kindness*? Do you have a warm, affectionate feeling for those who enjoy a like precious faith with you? Do you have *love* for all men, irrespective of their class, creed, nationality, or circumstances?

None Perfect

Admittedly, no one can claim perfection in the realization of any of the Christian graces in his life. Only Jesus was perfect in virtue, knowledge, self-control, etc. And, certainly, God can accept us in our moral and spiritual imperfection. He well knows that His children vary in their abilities to realize the abundance of His grace in godlike living. His grace allows for the human weakness that makes for sin in the life of each one of us. See Matthew 25:14,15; James 3:2; 1 John 1:7,8. Thus the Christian who has genuine faith in Christ can live without fear in spite of his personal shortcomings.

We must see, however, that there is a world of difference between the Christian who gives the more diligence to make his calling and election sure by growing in the Christian graces, even though he never becomes perfect in them, and the lazy indolent Christian who just plainly does not care about developing a Christlike personality. God accepts the former in spite of his imperfections, but He utterly rejects the latter. The former is a *faithful* Christian; the latter is an *unfaithful* Christian. What kind of a Christian are you? Are you daily applying yourself, prayerfully and zealously, to becoming *more* virtuous, *more* knowing, *more* self-controlled, etc.? You can *know* the answers to these questions and so determine whether you are making your calling and election sure.

Keeping from Stumbling

"For if ye do these things, *ye shall never stumble.*" The word "stumble" in the Greek is *ptaio*, meaning "*to fall into misery, become wretched* (often so in the Grk writ.): of the loss of salvation, 2 Pet. 1:10" (Thayer); "*to fail of an object, 1 Pet. 1:10*" (Harper). According to these definitions of Peter's use of the word *ptaio*, to stumble is to lose one's salvation, to fail of the ultimate object of the Christian life: heaven.

In urging Christians to give the more diligence to make their calling and election sure, thus to keep from stumbling, Peter assumes the possibility of their apostasy, loss of salvation, or forfeiture of eternal life. See 1 Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 10:26-31; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 3:4,5. But the apostle insists that such apostasy is not inevitable. It does not have to happen to any Christian. And it will never happen if we "do these things," the Christian graces. If we so do, we will live each day by an abiding faith in Christ and in the certainty of our calling and election. "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

The Glorious Consummation

What is the end of a life of abiding faith in Christ, of a faith that is demonstrated by growth in the Christian graces? "For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The term "supply" echoes verse 5: *supply* in your faith the Christian graces, and you will be *supplied* in turn the abundant and triumphant entrance into the eternal realm of the Lord. "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life" (Romans 6:22).

". . . the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:10-12).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:3-9).

Heaven. What a glorious consummation to a life lived by faith in the Son of God, a life of virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, a life that is essentially the reproduction of the life of Christ, a life that is lived in heavenly light, even the light of the Lord's presence!

Is such a life your life? Do you constantly keep before you the vision of the eternal glory to which your Lord is calling you? "And I

saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:1-7).

When this life is over and you stand in the presence of the blessed Lord, will you be privileged to hear the thrilling words: "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. . . . Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:21,34)? Will you be clothed in the beauty of Christ Himself, to live throughout eternity in perfect bliss, happiness, and joy?

Questions

1. What is meant by the phrase "your calling and election"?
2. Discuss the assurance of salvation that a Christian can have in Christ Jesus.
3. What does Peter say that the Christian must do to make his calling and election sure?
4. What are the *grounds* of the Christian's salvation in Christ? What is our access to this salvation?
5. How can we have the assurance of salvation in Christ in spite of our failure to live perfect lives?
6. What does Peter say will be the consummation of a life of virtue, knowledge, patience, etc.?
7. What does a careful, candid self-examination reveal concerning your spiritual status? Is Christ really in you? Are you demonstrating genuine faith in Him by growing in the Christian graces? Are you truly making your calling and election sure?

