

# Adding to Your Faith

(II Pet 1:3-15)

*Alan Hitchen*



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# Introduction

A few years back I was asked to preach a sermon entitled: “If I had only one sermon to preach.” After careful consideration I chose Peter’s words in his second letter(1:3-15). I have pondered this many times since and still believe this passage is one of the most practical and useful summaries found in the New Testament. The Spirit allowed Peter to frame this discussion in light of his coming departure. Since Peter knew he would soon die, these were among the most important things he wanted leave with us. Note how many times he stressed our need to **know/remember** these things and his **[INTENSE DESIRE]** to tell us about them.

*For this reason [I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT] to REMIND you ALWAYS of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, [I THINK IT IS RIGHT], as long as I am in this tent, to STIR YOU UP by REMINDING you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover [I WILL BE CAREFUL TO ENSURE] that you ALWAYS have a REMINDER of these things after my decease. 2Pet. 1:12-15.*

Peter revealed his strong conviction that “**these things**” just described(1:2-11) were of the highest importance to the Christian. As he viewed his coming death, he knew God’s servants in all future generations would be greatly blessed if they remembered them. He was doing all that was necessary so that after the violent death Jesus had warned him of occurred, we would always be able “to remember these things.”

*Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” 19 (This He said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) John 21:18-19*

This gives greater urgency to Peter’s words. As an inspired preacher and apostle for over 30 years and an elder in the church(1Pet. 5:1-3) he had preached many lessons and taught many classes. It is evident from his words that this lesson was very important. It should be obvious when an inspired Peter repeats something three times in four verses it was important! If he believed it was this important we ought to take note.

## If these things are yours...

One of the reasons Peter felt so strongly centered on the benefits to the Christian by adding these things to their faith.

*For if these things are yours and abound, **you will be(they make you to be-ASV) neither barren nor unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who **lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed** from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to **make your call and election sure**, for if you do these things **you will never stumble**; 11 for so **an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly** into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. 1:8-11*

By beginning with the conditional “for if,” Peter spoke of two possible outcomes. One would occur to those Christians who listened to him and gained *these things* and the other to those who did not.

### If we have these things

- ◆ Not idle nor unfruitful(busy and productive)
- ◆ Make calling and election sure.
- ◆ will never stumble
- ◆ Entrance into eternal kingdom richly supplied.

### If we do not have them

- Blind seeing only what is near
- Forgotten cleansing from old sins
- Loss of all in the left column: *idle, barren, called but not chosen; stumbling; rejected*

## For this very cause...

Another reason why Peter wanted Christians to remember *these things* is centered on God’s expectations. God did many things to bring us into the church Jesus purchased with His own blood(Acts 20:28). Many sacrifices had been made and many promises given. The things Peter wanted remembered were God’s expectations as to what those who were saved would do for

Him and for themselves in response for all God and Jesus had done for them.

*as His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also **for this very reason, giving(adding on your part-ASV) all diligence, 2Pet. 1:3-5***

Peter knew that as each Christian came to fully appreciate what God had done, gratitude would move them to their greatest efforts. We were *helpless, still sinners, and enemies* when God demonstrated His own love(Rom. 5:6-10). God so loved He gave His only begotten Son(Jn. 3:16). With divine power(*by grace have you been saved Eph .2:1-10*) God granted what was necessary(*power of God unto salvation - Rom. 1:16-17*). Then God gave “*precious and exceeding great promises*” of salvation, eternal life, mercy, grace, forgiveness. Thus gratitude, hope, anticipation, joy and peace all combine to bring the best of each of us to the surface. There is no end to the promises! *Every spiritual blessing*(Eph. 1:3), *a living hope*(1Pet. 1:3-5), the *resurrection*(1Cor. 15), access to God through prayer, adoption into God’s family, forgiveness, salvation, and the knowledge that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. As John so eloquently put it:

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1Jn. 3:1-3*

What then is the hub of all that Peter described? After obeying the gospel, God wants us to diligently add seven things to our faith.

<i>add to your faith. . . . .</i>	<b>virtue</b>
<i>to virtue. . . . .</i>	<b>knowledge</b>
<i>to knowledge. . . . .</i>	<b>self-control</b>
<i>to self-control. . . . .</i>	<b>perseverance</b>
<i>to perseverance. . . . .</i>	<b>godliness</b>
<i>to godliness. . . . .</i>	<b>brotherly kindness</b>
<i>to brotherly kindness . . . . .</i>	<b>love</b>

Peter sought all of us to remember these things day by day after his decease. He wanted us to always call them to mind.

# Adding on Your Part

In the first eleven verses of his second letter, Peter summed up God's entire plan of salvation. He began with God's divine power granting us everything necessary for life and godliness and ended with each of us having our entrance abundantly supplied into the eternal kingdom. God made these plans before the beginning(Eph. 1:3-4; Titus 1:9), and yet our entrance into the eternal kingdom happens after the end(1Cor. 15:24). It summed up everything God has done and will do from the very beginning to very end. In between these two events, knowing what God has done for us, Peter explained what God expected His people to do for Him and for themselves.

## His Divine Power...

After Adam sinned, sin and death entered the world(Rom. 5:12). Because of the seductive nature of temptation and sin, all future generations lived under the threat of powerful temptations. Paul summed up the terrible reality. No one had ever lived without sinning except Jesus(Rom. 3:10-23). God knew this! God understood the terrible consequences because man brought sin and death into the world(Rom. 5:12-21). But because He was rich in mercy, He had already devised a plan to solve this even before they did it. If we still trust Him and want to serve Him, through His divine power He has provided it. He made Eve a wonderful promise that one of her sons(Jesus) would bruise the head of the serpent(Gen. 3:15). In great wisdom and love God created the gospel. He wrote the Old Testament Scriptures to reveal all that He had done to bring Christ into the world.

Then in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law to bring redemption(Gal. 4:4). Jesus came to seek and save the lost and to give His life a ransom for many. Through His death and the gift of the Holy Spirit guiding the apostles into all truth, Jesus built His church. "*All things necessary for life and godliness*" were prepared on a grand scale. All of this had been done while all were His enemies living in rebellion and were by nature children of wrath(Rom. 5:5-11; Eph. 2). But now, all has been prepared, and all are invited to come to Him and find rest for their souls(Mt. 11:28-30). Peter summed all that God has done and will do in one verse.

*as His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 2Pet. 1:3*

As we carefully read these words our hearts should be filled with awe, reverence and gratitude. That is what they were written to create in the hearts of the godly. God did everything man could never do. It was already done and it is a priceless gift beyond anything man could have hoped for. God revealed the depths and blackness of our despair without these gifts. We were dead in our own sin, without hope and doomed to eternal destruction(Eph. 2:1-22). Praise to God for freely granting everything for life and godliness!

Through the gospel, God gave the tools, the power, and the wisdom necessary to work out our own salvation(Phil. 2:12). God freely gave the means. We owe Him a debt of gratitude that should lead us to our greatest efforts of working and toiling for Him in return! Anything God asked after doing so much should be considered a debt of honor and gratitude. Something to willingly and freely pay. That is exactly how Paul felt and what motivated him to his great work.

*For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1Cor. 15:9-10*

Many have followed Paul in this attitude. This is exactly what Peter sought. By grace we have "*all things that pertain to life and godliness.*" As Paul said, that grace must not be bestowed in vain. We too need to labor more abundantly. Gratitude compels our greatest efforts.

## His Precious and Exceeding Great Promises

Yet God did not stop with making salvation possible. After He gave man "*everything that pertains to life and godliness*" He also gave "*exceedingly great and precious promises.*"

*by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 1:4*

God made many promises to keep His people from discouragement and help them to be strongly motivated. He knew the battles we would face and wanted us to win.

- Eternal life Titus 1:2
- Forgiveness(1Jn. 1:9)
- Access to Power Eph. 3:20
- Every spiritual blessing Eph. 1:3
- A living hope. 1Pet. 1:3-5
- We shall be like Him 1Jn. 3:1-3
- New heavens & new earth2Pet. 3:13
- A new body 1Cor. 15:42-44, 52-53
- The resurrection 1Th. 4:15-17

## **With Means and Motivation We Can and Must Act!**

So Peter began his letter at that moment when each Christian heard and had obeyed the gospel. When by the grace and mercy of God everything we needed was granted as a gift. Motivated with His promises, we began our Christian life pure, holy and perfect. Every Christian left the water of baptism as a partaker(in fellowship) with the divine nature. Through forgiveness and God's mighty power we were born again and made sinless and holy. We had been raised to walk in newness of life and had "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

This is what God gave by grace after we believed(Eph. 2:8). We then stood on the threshold of a new world. In many ways we were in the same position as Adam and Eve after the creation. Just as they had been given a new world and told to take dominion, we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness so we can take dominion. Peter summed up God expectations by commanding us to get busy and diligently add to our faith.

*But also for this very reason giving(adding on your part-ASV) all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 2Pet. 1:5*

What was given by grace must now be made as real as possible by our efforts. By grace we have escaped "the corruption in this world by lust." So now, "for this very reason," we must be diligent to "add on our part." Just as God told Adam and Eve to tend the garden and take dominion, He has told us to tend our hearts and take dominion!

## **Adding On Your Part**

While most translations have only "giving" the ASV translators sought to better convey the exact definition of this word. Peter had many words to choose from. If he had only sought to convey the idea of giving, he had several much more simpler words. Yet he chose this word, and it is the only time it is used in the NT, so it is wise to take the time to understand exactly what the Spirit meant to convey:

*par-eis-phero...* "to bring in besides" (*para* - besides; *eis* - in; *phero* - to bring)... "to add," 2Pet. 1:5, "adding on your part" (R.V.); the words "on your part" represent the intensive force of the verb; the KJV, "giving" does not provide an adequate meaning; (Vine ; 3923)

*eis-phero...* 1. The word is found in secular literature for "to carry or bring in" either things, or persons, It is also used for the "conveying" of messages ... In the NT the literal sense is the most common with reference to things: "We "brought nothing into" this world" (1Tim. 6:7), persons: The sick man is "brought into" the house (Lk. 5:18) ... (Kittel, 1533).

First, this is a triple compound word. It is made up of *para*, which means *beside* or *along side*(like *para*-ble - to cast alongside), *eis* which means *entering into* or *within*; and *phero*, which means to *carry* or *bring in*. The second definition shows that the word clearly means to bring or carry in.

Literally this word means that God wants us to "bring in on the side" or "carry in on the side" of what He has done for us. The ASV "adding on your part" perfectly captures the meaning of the word.

After God did everything we could not do, He commanded us to "bring in on the side" of what He has done. That we "add on our part" to His part.

There are many illustrations of how this works in every day life. When we get up in the morning we have to "add on our part" to take a shower. Massive effort has been put forth to bring water into our home. Damns have been built, pipes have been buried and maintained, our home has been fitted with plumbing, including a hot water heater. Because of all this work, we have the means to take



a shower. But as we stand in the shower, we must add on our part by turning on the faucet and adjusting it to just the right temperature. With all the effort and toil that has been done, only when we *bring in along side of all that*, or “*add on our part*,” can we have a hot shower. We do exactly the same thing a light switch for electricity, a key in the ignition for a car, or working on a computer.

All the efforts that bring great blessings within our reach are in vain if we do not *add on our part*. When a home is built the plumbing and electrical connections along with the fixtures and switches were all designed for us to add our part whenever we want them. Flipping a switch is insignificant compared to the generators, transmission wires, transformer, circuit breakers, light bulbs, etc. But all that is in vain if we don't add our part.

This is the meaning of the word. We are God's workmanship from start to finish. He has exerted power in ways we cannot even imagine and the omnipotent efforts put forth to save us dwarf anything we do. Yet without “*bringing in on the side*” of what God has done, all His work is in vain. We must “walk in the works God prepared.” We must “work out our own salvation.”

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph. 2:10*

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Phil. 2:12-13*

Although everyone know that our side of our salvation is insignificant compared to that of God's, God still expects us to do our part with the same effort and faithfulness that He did in bringing it to us. In other words, with all our might! Just as He used His divine power, we must use our human power.

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. Eccl. 9:10*

## All Diligence

*But also for this very reason giving(adding on your part-ASV) all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 2Pet. 1:5*

Doing this with all our might is demanded in the phrase “*all diligence*” We are to bring all our “*earnestness, zeal*” or “*the haste accompanying this*.”

“*spoude... “earnestness, zeal,”* or sometimes “*the haste accompanying this*,” ... is translated “diligence” in ... 2 Peter 1:5; (Vine's 4710).

Are we as intense as Abraham? When God asked him to be circumcised, he did it the same day(Gen. 17:23). When asked to offer Isaac, he began early the next morning (Gen. 22:3). Whenever God wanted something done it was more important to Abraham than anything else in his life. That is the type of earnestness and zeal God wants to see in all His servants! When he added “*all*” He made it clear that we must “*always*” “*perpetually*,” “*in every condition*” “*in every way*” “*on every side*” and “*in every particular*” “*add on our part*.”

“*pas*,... I. adjectivally,... a. *any, every one*(namely, of the class denoted by the noun annexed to *pas*);... *all or any of the class indicated*... b. *any and every, of every kind*, ... 2. *everything, (anything) whatsoever*;... *always, perpetually*,... *in every condition, or in every matter*, ... *in everything, in every way, on every side, in every particular or relation*,...” (Thayer, p. 491-493; 3956).

We are to bring limitless zeal and enthusiasm to these things. All day and every day, under all circumstances and at all times we are to be zealous, earnest and in haste. But to what is this zeal to be directed? We are to earnestly and zealously “*add on our part*.”

Although God did everything man could not do, He will not do what we can do for ourselves. God expected us to take the means and motivation and work as hard as we can for as long as we can! It is very similar to Noah and the ark. God gave Noah grace in sparing him from the flood, but He told Noah to build the ark. God saved Noah, but expected Noah to “*add on his part*” by building the ark. He expected Abraham to “*add on his part*” by leaving his country. All God's servants have been called by grace to “*add on his part*.” Some of those who by faith added on their part are listed in

Hebrew 11. The line between being faithful and unfaithful had nothing to do with God's grace, gifts, or promises. These are fixed and constant for everyone. For God "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*(1Tim. 2:4-5).

Our success or failure in our own hands. It is up to us to use His power and promises. If we use these tools to restore His image within ourselves, not simply by grace but also supplemented by our own effort and toil, we can please Him in our generation just as Noah or Abraham did in theirs. So in order to add on our part, using our faith, we must "*supply*:"

*epichoregeo ... to supply, furnish, present ... 2Pet. 1:5; ... in passive, furnished, provided, 2Pet. 1:11; ... to be supplied, ministered unto, assisted ...* (Thayer ; 2023)

With "*all diligence*" and "*all our might*" we "*add on our part*" to all God has done for us by *supplying, furnishing* and *presenting* to God the seven things listed. They are the hub of what God expects of us for all He has done for us. These are the things that bring all the blessings. These are the things Peter wanted to remind us of and that after his decease we will be able to call these things to mind. In the rest of this book, we will look at these seven things that we are to add to our faith.

*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 2 Pet. 1:5-8*

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# Virtue

*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue... 2 Pet. 1:5*

There is a big difference between the way we use the word “*virtue*” today and the way the Greeks used it. After carefully reviewing the definitions, we see that it is a word that would be hard to capture with a single English word.

*arete... can refer to excellence of achievement, to mastery in a specific field, on the one side, or to endowment with higher power on the other, or often to both together. ... The subject of achievement may be lands, animals, objects, parts of the body, but mostly it is man....” (Kittel, TDWNT Vol. 1 p. 457)*

*“arete,...a word of very wide signification in Grk. writ.; any excellence of a person (in body or mind) or of a thing, an eminent endowment, property or quality. Used of the human mind and in an ethical sense it denotes 1. a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action; virtue, moral goodness...” (Thayer, p. 73; 703).*

“*Virtue*” describes the effort people put forth to achieve “*excellence*” or “*mastery*” in any field of endeavor. Our culture may use different words to describe it, but it certainly has the same attitude toward such things. A trip to the county fair shows that people still use “*animals*” and “*objects*” to gain “*mastery in a specific field*” or “*excellence of achievement.*” They offer a blue ribbon for animals (bulls, lambs, pigs), cooking (pies, pickles) produce (grapes, apples) or skills (knitting, needlepoint, painting) etc. A walk down the magazine aisle in a grocery store also stresses this point. There are magazines for the best computer, car, boat, etc. There are tips for running better, swimming faster, building up the body, and books on achieving and gaining mastery. This reveals that multitudes of people love striving “*virtue*” today. They want “*excellence of achievement*” and “*mastery in a specific field.*”

So what about us? Where does our *virtue* lie. We can identify our most important interests by what we talk about; how we use our time and money, what we read and the reasons we choose our friends. Most of us have known the joy and excitement of finding a new hobby or activity we completely fell in love with. At that point, we began to buy whatever was necessary and to read and study the important things to become as good as we can at it. For some it is a sport like golf, tennis, or bicycle riding. Others find their niche in cooking, computers, or cars. Still others gain their self-esteem and enjoyment from video games or politics. God want us to add it to our faith!

One thing remains constant, to be *virtue*, it must captivate our heart so we give it our all. There is an inexhaustible supply of enthusiasm and interest for things we enjoy. It is the intensity of this interest that leads us to spend time, money and effort to “master” and become excellent.

## ... sell all that he has...

In the parable of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price (Mt. 13:44-46), Jesus described the dynamics of *virtue* in His disciples. For these two merchants, it made perfect sense to sacrifice everything. The treasure and the pearl had greater worth than they had to sell to gain them. This represented those who recognize the kingdom of God is so precious and valuable it is worth every sacrifice. When we are fully convinced that what Jesus left heaven to die for is that important to us, we are prepared to add *virtue*! It our one hope (Eph. 4:4) transcending all others and worthy of every sacrifice (Rom. 8:18; 12:1-2). Once we understand and accept this, *virtue* will follow naturally.

Once we make this our goal, *virtue* will take over and bring us to it. Those who prepare for the Olympics use *virtue* to make the necessary sacrifices to compete. Once a goal is set, *virtue* brings the determination to bring it to completion. It is *virtue* that creates heroes, gold medalists, and champions! Paul sought to convey this image to the Corinthians and gave a classic example of *virtue*.

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. 1Cor. 9:24-27*

While the Olympian sought a perishable wreath(or gold medal today), our prize is imperishable glory! Their effort, enthusiasm and energy should pale in comparison to ours! When those striving for material things have more virtue than the children of God, we set ourselves up for the rebuke from the Lord. He can see if it is happening.

*For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. Lk. 16:8*

We only manifest unfaithfulness/lukewarmness when we put more effort into a hobby or job, than we do for our service for God. Jesus sees such service as being lukewarm.

*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Rev. 3:15-17*

Virtue makes us hot, full of zeal, determination and ambition. We want to be the best we can be. When we have *virtue* it makes perfect sense to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”(Mt. 6:33).

Although every person has different degrees of ability, intensity, enthusiasm, time or money, God expects our first fruits, and when *virtue* is diligently added to our faith, whatever those best efforts are, they will be given for God first!

The degree of intensity we have shifted from this world to the next manifests how much *virtue* we have added. It always takes sacrifice and effort to become excellent. Paul led the way in *virtue*. After conversion, he shook himself free from all former pursuits and put it all into being a Christian.

*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. Phil. 3:7-8*

After leaving them behind, he never looked back with longing. They were still rubbish years later. True *virtue* will never look back at sacrifices as mistakes. It never looks back with longing. As Jesus said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk 9:62.), so we too must “remember Lot’s wife” (Lk. 17:32)!

After Paul sold all that he had to buy that field, he put his energy into faith. He wanted “excellence of achievement” in service to God and “mastery” in his quest for maturity.

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus Phil. 3:12-14*

This is what *virtue* added to *faith* looks like. Do we “have this mind” in us? Do we “walk by the same rule” Paul set for himself? Have we searched through the congregation for those with these qualities of *virtue* and desire for excellence making them an example to pattern our lives after?

*“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. Phil. 3:15-17*

It takes firm commitment and a powerful desire for excellence to reach the “goal for the prize of the upward call of God.” It will take all the energy, enthusiasm and desire to sacrifice we can muster. The top of this mountain is higher than we can ever imagine. But those who climb with *earnest zeal, diligence* and *virtue*, will climb high with God’s grace and the wonderful power of the gospel!

Hebrews Eleven lists God’s servants who added *virtue* to their faith, took hold of whatever task God gave them and did the best they could to complete it. The Spirit encouraged us to follow their example.

*“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” Heb. 12:1*

We all have a race to run, and we must run it with endurance! Laying aside the weights required *virtue*. Day by day, denial, sacrifice and adding more created greater speed and accuracy. Moses exemplified this *virtue*.

*“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. Heb. 11:24-26*

Moses looked at the reward, not the sacrifices. This is what *virtue* always does. When one looks at the benefits they do not feel the sacrifices. When they look at the sacrifices, they lose sight of the benefits. Living the life of Christ requires sacrifice, becoming a mature Christian requires a pressing on toward the goal.

Day by day by day *virtue* leads us to deny self, make every sacrifice to grow. In time it leads to the very things listed in the definition: *‘excellence of achievement, mastery in a specific field... endowment with higher power.’* When God sees this type of effort and accomplishment He takes notice.

*Then the LORD said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? Job 1:8*

Job stood out! He was the best in all the earth! He was blameless, upright, feared God and shunned evil. This had begun in his early youth when he added *virtue* to his faith and decided he wanted to master and be the best he could be (Job 31). Job should be an example to all of us. Without that, we are always at risk of the word being choked and becoming unfruitful.

*the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, Mt. 13:22 ... those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. Lk. 8:14*

Examples of Virtue:

The ten and five talent men when compared to the one talent man. (Mt. 25:14-30)  
The five wise virgins when compared to the five foolish virgins. (Mt. 25:1-13)  
The good Samaritan when compared to the priest and Levite. (Lk. 10:30-37)  
Moses when compared to the children of Israel.  
David before Goliath when compared to the others in Israel.  
*Each was given the opportunity. Those who saw the opportunity with virtue (wanting to master and achieve excellence) excelled while those who had no virtue felt no need to buy up the opportunity and failed.*

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# Knowledge

When a mother and father first gaze into the eyes of their infant child, the burden of responsibility weighs heavy on their mind. This child knows nothing and is helpless. He must be carried, protected and taught. As the years pass, the child slowly learns the language of his parents. He learns to read, write, and work with numbers. He learns the history of his people and the skills necessary to earn a living. As he becomes an adult, this infant can now marry, have children and guide them.

This is exactly what God expects of us. After we obeyed the gospel, we were born again and as newborn babes, had to drink the milk of God's word.

*Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 1 Peter 2:1-3*

The *knowledge* of God's word produced the same strength and efficiency as the example above. Each Christian begins with milk and with diligence and virtue, soon moves to the meat of God's word. Some among the Hebrews had not added this *knowledge* to their faith and were rebuked.

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:12-14*

No matter how much we know before we become a Christian, everything changes so much and becomes so new that we must relearn everything and renew our mind on everything.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor. 5:17-18*

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rom 12:1-2*

We cannot trust any *knowledge* gleaned that has not been validated and proven by God's word. Everything is new! Everything must be reevaluated and reassessed. It must all be proved and pass the test of God's word. We can't use our parents, culture, or conscience to determine the best way to work, be a husband/wife or mother/father. We must assess what God has to say about the subject.

Infants are completely helpless, and rely on their parents guidance to walk, talk, reason and grow. In exactly the same way those who are born again must rely upon God to learn how to walk, talk, reason and grow. Christians cannot live and function in the spiritual and moral world without His guidance and training. There are just too many false paths and deceptions. Without the compass and map created by God to help us through the maze of life we will never find the way:

*O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. Jer. 10:23*

We must not underestimate the dangers we face. We don't know which path is safe, which path leads to wisdom and success. God has often been disappointed by the lack of *knowledge* and preparation in His people. They were often unprepared for the rigors of spiritual life. Many failed because they didn't gain the necessary skills to succeed. No one can succeed without God's help and counsel:

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Pr. 14:12*

*Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Mt. 7:14*

Those who do not gain the *knowledge* to use God's tools will miss this path and be destroyed:

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6*

This is so obvious to us when we are traveling to an area we have never been before. We always get a road map or seek directions. When we purchase a new product, we want an owners manual to study, when we are cooking something for the first time, we want the exact recipe. When we are taking something apart, we want a repair manual to guide us.

Those who know their limitations, accept them, and seek to overcome them. This is the very essence of wisdom and living a successful life. It is also the reason God wants us to add *knowledge*. We have never passed through life before, we have never been servants of God before. The Scriptures are our road map, owners manual, recipe, and repair manual.

*5 But also for this very reason, (adding on your part -ASV) giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 2Pet. 1:5*

The *excellence in achievement and mastery* that defines virtue must be directed toward learning God's Word. The effort, labor and toil we direct toward such *knowledge* will be abundantly rewarded. There is nothing we can desire that will more richly repay us than a mastery of the Word of God and the wisdom it brings! Over and over God promised great blessings. Honor, peace, wealth, long life and decreased trouble are offered to those who set their hearts to this challenge:

*When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, 11 Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, 12 To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, Pr. 2:10-12*

Those who work to add *knowledge* to their faith and virtue soon gain an understanding of life that leads to a discretion that preserves and an understanding that protects them. We will be delivered from the way of evil and avoid many terrible pitfalls.

*Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; 14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. 16 Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her. Pr. 3:13-18*

God promised those who find wisdom and gain understanding will be happy. Her value exceeds money in the bank. She is more precious and brings greater benefits than jewels or anything else life can offer. She holds out both long life riches and honor to those who reach out for her. Those who master her ways find pleasant paths leading to peace and happiness.

*Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. 8 Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her. 9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you. Pr. 4:5-9*

God has strongly exhorted His people to put forth all their effort and toil to gain wisdom and understanding. If we never quit seeking for her and always love her, we will be saved from grave danger. Wisdom is the principle thing of life. There is nothing this life offers that brings greater reward and honor than understanding God's will. If we exalt her (use our virtue), she will promote us to honor. These precious and exceeding great promises ought to motivate us to read, meditate and study Scripture as well as pray for wisdom and understanding. They compel us to attend all classes and sermons! No efforts should be spared to gain wisdom/*knowledge*. When a man with virtue is seeking *knowledge* he will feel the same way as the author of Psalm 119.

*24 Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors... 97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. 98 You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. 102 I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me. 103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. 106 I have sworn and confirmed That I will keep Your righteous judgments. Ps. 119:24, 97-106*

Those who make God's word a delight and counselor for guidance in all troubles will find great blessings. We must love God's law! Think about it all the time! It will make us wiser than those who



seek to destroy us. It will help us understand more than both teachers and the aged ones who have gleaned all the wisdom living in this life brings. Even the experiences of this life cannot offer the same understanding God's word does! Life leaves too many pieces out of the puzzle. No one can see the whole picture without the understanding God put in His Word!

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. Ps. 19:7-11*

In this passage, the value of God's word is set forth for what it does for man. It is perfect, and able to convert soul's from death to life. It is sure, making simple people wise. It is right, giving great joy and pleasure to the heart of those who find it. It is pure, enlightening the eyes of all who cannot see. It is clean, and endures forever and ever. This is what makes Gods' Word so desirable. There is great reward both in this life and in the life to come.

Paul's final words to Timothy are a fitting way to conclude the value and scope of adding knowledge:

*But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. !! Tim. 3:14-17*

Timothy had made the *knowledge* of God's Word one of life's greatest goals, and challenges since early childhood. He had placed his sights on excellent achievement and mastery in the *knowledge* of God's Word. Paul exhorted him to continue in the things he had learned and never forget that the Holy Scriptures had made him wise unto salvation. Because it was inspired by God, it is profitable for proper understanding of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction. Those who master them are complete, thoroughly equipped to accomplish every good work. Brethren give diligence! We will be repaid a hundredfold for every hour we spend learning and growing in the *knowledge* of Scripture! Then, we too can be a blessing to others who seek the same.

*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2Tim. 2:2-3*

As God encouraged Joshua, if we want to have good success, we must never stop thinking about, talking about and doing God's word.

*Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Josh. 1:7-9*

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# Self - Control

The progression from virtue to knowledge and from knowledge to self control is easily seen in Paul's words to the Corinthians about Olympic contenders.

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. 1Cor. 9:24-27(NASB)*

To compete in the games, one must have the powerful desire of *virtue* that will lead them on their quest for *excellence of achievement* and *mastery*. It takes great sacrifices of time, energy and even pain to reach a level to win such a race. But even with the greatest desire, it will never happen without a good coach who can train and give the *knowledge* necessary to make the right decisions and do the right things. Yet *virtue* and *knowledge* are only preparatory. They give the opportunity for success, but to the desire for excellence and the wisdom to make just the right sacrifices must be added *self-control*! Without *self-control*, the hours of dedication necessary to train will never happen. Those who want to win(*virtue*) and know how to win(*knowledge*), still must push ourselves beyond what others will endure(*self-control*) to win the race.

The Christian walks the same path. *Virtue* and *knowledge* will always need *self-control* to get to the next level. Without *self-control*, *virtue* and *knowledge* will never reach any goal. *Virtue* compels and motivates us to learn all we can about good and evil. Through *knowledge* the Spirit revealed good and evil, for “*solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:14).* But after we “*test all things;*” we will not be able to “*hold fast what is good,*” and “*abstain from every form of evil*” (1Th. 5:21-22), without *self-control*.

## Mastering, Curbing, Controlling, and Restraining

*“egkrates,... 2. having power over, possessed of (a thing),... 3. mastering, controlling, curbing, restraining,... controlling one’s self, temperate...” (Thayer, p 167; 1466)*

*“egkrates ... 1. The word group egkrat- takes its sense from the stem krat- which denotes power or lordship and which expresses the power or lordship which one has either over oneself or over something... having power in oneself, ...It thus means “to have power or dominion...” i.e., “to be inwardly strong.” (Kittel, 1466)*

*Self-control* brings *dominion* over our entire life. With *self-control*, all thoughts, words, actions and plans are within our *power* to stop. *Self-control* is the ability to *master, curb, control* and *restrain* ourselves. It places us as ruler with *lordship* over our mind, body, and emotions. We direct them and never allow them to direct us. We all have the power of lordship, but it is up to us to take it. This is what Paul meant when he said “*I buffet my body and make it my slave.*” The only real reason we ever succumb to any temptation is lack of *self-control*. God always makes a way of escape.

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10:13*

*Self-control* gives us the time and the ability to find the way of escape. The power and lordship we exert within ourselves when we feel an enticement to sin can stop that enticement dead. The definition of temptation makes this obvious. “*Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed*” (Jas. 1:14). If lust is *mastered, curbed, controlled* and *restrained* the temptation will be stopped, the enticement removed, and the way of escaped found and taken. We can stop ourselves from being *drawn away and enticed*.

All temptation can be borne because God promised we would never face a temptation we could not bear. Each failure manifests a lack of either *virtue, knowledge, or self-control* and if we carefully assess what happened we will see where our efforts must be directed. Paul compared it to what

athletes exert over their own bodies to gain mastery. They don't have to focus as much on their strengths as they do on their weaknesses.

We must fight, resist and strive against sin! Paul spoke of his own *self-control* as running with aim, fighting to win, and buffeting his body to make it a slave to his will. He was very concerned about disqualification. Paul knew he must use *self-control* or he could be disqualified. Jesus warned us that no matter how painful or how deep the sacrifice, it must be done or all can be lost.

*“And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire. 9 “And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell.” Mt. 18:8-10*

All are expected to take dominion over their will(*self-control*), and make whatever sacrifice is necessary. Even to the point of death.

*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. Heb. 12:4*

God knows we have the power and dominion to do this. Many have already done so.

*Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. Heb. 11:35-39*

We dare not take this lightly. There is much more we could do to master and curb ourselves if we were willing to take on more pain and sacrifice. Those who lived before us were willing to suffer pain and make great sacrifices. Their *virtue, knowledge* and *self-control* are a great example for each of us.

## But I am only Human

Satan has created many evil errors that hold man back from this quality of growth and maturity. Multitudes use the proverb “*I am only human*” as an excuse to be weak. When we have suffered enough, and seek to give in to a temptation, we make such rationalizations. Yet this proverb is not found in Scripture. It is of human origin and has no place in the mind of a Christian. There is nothing in Scripture to justify such reasoning.

Remember, we were created in the image and likeness of God and made a little lower than the angels(Gen. 1:26-27; Ps. 8:5). God crowned us with glory and honor. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus used the strengths and abilities of being “only human” to live a perfect life. “*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” (Heb. 4:14-16).

Before we obeyed the gospel and were without strength we might have made such an excuse, BUT NOT NOW! Remember how Peter began this section. God gave us His divine power and godliness through the gospel and along with precious and exceeding great promises. Through these we **have been made** a partaker of the divine nature and **escaped** the corruption in the world by lust. Though these gifts were given by grace, we must see each failure as a sign of weakness. We must repent and begin again. We must buffet our body, resist even unto blood, and fight the good fight of faith. But we must never make excuses that destroy *virtue*, loosen our *self-control* and are contrary to the truths found in the Scripture.

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Rom. 6:12-14*

Our present level of *self-control* is a combination of past victories, paths averted and the agonizing crucifixion of lusts and desires tasted in the past. But it is also hindered by our failures and the excuses we make. We all tie ourselves to sin by the threads of habit we create each time we give in to temptation. When we succumb to temptation we strengthen the habit and bind ourselves more strongly to it. Habits must be broken the same way they were created: One thought and one deed

at a time. But because we are under grace, sin can never have dominion because we can seek forgiveness and begin again.

## **Each Disciple must Take up his own Cross Daily**

Jesus demanded we use the instrument of His choice to break these habits and He was both firm and stern in His expectations:

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Lk. 9:23*

*"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" Lk. 14:27*

If we truly want to come after Jesus, then we must deny ourselves (*exercise self-control in all things*)! We must take up our cross daily and follow Him. There is no latitude here. If we do not carry our own cross and come after him we CANNOT be His disciple!

It is important to remember what those who were hearing this for the first time would think about what Jesus said. The cross had not yet gone through the transformation Jesus death upon it has created today. Now it is seen as a sign of God's grace and mercy. But that is not what they heard. They could hear only one thing: *Death by Crucifixion*. The cross was only used by the Romans to inflict painfully slow and humiliating way death. Scourged, nailed by hands and/or feet, and left to die in public view. Death came slowly through suffocation, infection, starvation, and/or thirst. The cross Jesus demanded we carry brought slow and agonizing death to worldliness. The denial He demanded would not be quick or painless. When Jesus said *"take up his cross daily"* or *"carry his own cross"* they heard *"instrument of death,"* and so should we.

Without a cross one *"cannot be My disciple,"* for *"he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me"* (Mt. 10:38). Therefore, *"if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross"* (Mt. 16:24-25). NOTE: Jesus never told His disciples to carry **"My cross."** He said each disciple must take up **"his own cross."** Jesus used Rome's cross as a spiritual parable. It is one of the *"weapons of our warfare"* (2Cor. 10:3-6). Each disciple must learn to build and create his own cross to crucify his desires and kill his own will, then learn to use it through practice.

It is the weapon Jesus gave us to give up pleasures, relationships, bad habits or even our life when they get in the way of faithful service. We must learn to carry/use this cross to make agonizing long term sacrifices for Him, only through this means can we reach the level of *self-control* He expects.

Paul is the perfect example of how the cross was used for crucifixion. It was a two step process. God did it first by grace. For when Paul was *"buried with Him through baptism into death,"* his *"old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with"* (Rom. 6:4-6). It was by grace that God brought Paul to *"the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world"* (Gal. 6:14). All this occurred when he heeded the words of Ananias: *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."* Acts 22:16 Paul then stood exactly where Peter began. He had been given *all things pertaining to life and godliness*. He had been given the *precious and exceeding great promises*. He was a *partaker of the divine nature and had escaped the corruption in the world through lust* (2Pet 1:3-5). Then Paul *added on his part* and took up **his own** cross. With virtue, knowledge and self-control Paul used his own cross so well that *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal. 2:20). God began it by grace in baptism, and Paul continued it by taking up his own cross in self-denial.

Think about it. When we are *"tempted and enticed"* it is agony to deny it. Our lusts demand fulfillment and intensify as we deny them. Picture yourself in the midst of a temptation taking out your cross, nailing your hands and feet to it (spiritually) and remaining there until that desire is dead. That is what Paul meant by *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* It is how *"those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"* (Gal. 5:24).

Everything hindering full service must be crucified. In every temptation each disciple must **"deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"** (Lk. 9:23). Imagine Jesus' agony on His cross and the temptation to *"come down from the cross,"* yet He endured it (Mt. 27:39-43). So we too

when tempted want to come down from our cross. Jesus suffered agony on the cross for our salvation. He expected us to suffer a similar agony in self-denial. We use our cross until fleshly desires are dead and we are crucified! It is excruciating to kill our own will and completely submit to our Lord. This is why we need the cross daily! *Self-control* is painful, but nailed to our cross, with no other choice but to remain there, we endure. With this great weapon we can do great things.

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh 4(for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), 5 casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; 2 Cor. 10:3-5*

## **Put to Death**

Armed with our own cross which we are carrying with us daily, we have the spiritual weapon necessary for denial and self-control. Only in this way can we truly put them to death.

*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, Col. 3:5-9*

Gaining *self-control* will often bring intense pain. Such denial tears at the heart and soul, but all who belong to Christ must do it!

*for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Rom. 8:13*

With the enticements and allurements found in the world, each must contend with temptations to leave duty and fulfill lust. When these strong surges of emotion or desire enter the heart those who are Christ's endure the intense pain that comes from denying them. This is the true essence of *self-control*. This is what God's grace teaches us:

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, Titus 2:11-12*

*Self-control* slowly and painfully gives us the ability to keep all God's positive commands as well as all negative ones. In this respect our heart becomes our kingdom, and all our thoughts, desires, emotions and intents are our subjects. God tells us how to rule over them and with *self-control* we bring our realm into subjection. Once they are in subjection(*we have cleansed and purged ourselves*) we become a vessel for honor, useful for the Master, and prepared for every good work.

*Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 2 Tim. 2:19-21*

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# Perseverance

The initial fire, zeal, and excitement of becoming a Christian in possession of God's precious and exceedingly great promises can last for years in some and for months or even weeks in others. There is no way to predict when or how, but sooner or later something will occur of an unexpected nature, or the passage of time will lead us to take things begin taking things for granted. This is the natural state of the human race. We can't sustain, zeal, enthusiasm and excitement indefinitely.

*Perseverance* is God's remedy and solution. We cannot count on emotions forever. Sooner or later they will be exhausted. When that happens as our own proverb puts it: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" When we start thinking things like these we will need *perseverance*:

I just don't feel like doing this anymore!	What is the use, I just can't go on!
How can God let things like this happen?	Why is this happening to me?
Why does God ask for such hard things?	Why don't I give up, it would be easier?

Though there are many specific reasons, the need for *perseverance* arises due to discouragement, complacency, or disillusionment. Things just did not go quite as we expected. With Job, it was the loss of possessions, health and the erroneous comfort of the three friends. With Elijah, it was the joy of the victory against the prophets of Baal that came crashing down when he realized it had not accomplished what he had hoped(1Kings 19:1-4; 8-18). With Moses it was the grinding pressure of the unfaithful children of Israel(Num. 11:10-15). Jesus also spoke of those who must face tribulations or persecutions.

*But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word(choked with cares, riches, pleasures of life Lk. 8:14), and he becomes unfruitful. Mt. 13:20-23*

As Jesus pointed out, the life of His servants begins pleasantly with joy. Yet tribulation and persecutions will arise for some and cares, riches, and pleasures of life will compete with the sacrifices the Lord expects of us for others.

Once again there is a clear progression in Peter's words. *Virtue* produces the desire for *knowledge*. *Knowledge* reveals the efforts we must put forth. *Self-control* puts forth the efforts. The need for *perseverance* will arise when discouragement or complacency threaten to destroy what has already been built. Returning again to our Olympic contender, after months or even years of training, he too can grow discouraged. Perhaps his progress is no longer reaching his expectations. Maybe he is beginning to want to enjoy some of the things he cannot do while in training. So his coach sits him down and explains to him that he must find it within himself to keep going. Such times come to everyone and it is those who can keep going and push through them who ultimately win the victory.

## **Job and the Prophets had Perseverance**

*My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who **endured**(*hupomeno*). You have heard of the **perseverance**(*hupomone*) of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord-- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. Jas. 5:11*

*Perseverance* and endurance are considered great blessings. To stand fast under the most severe trials is a mark of greatness in Scripture. The *perseverance* of Job gives great comfort to us because Job proved it could be done. That no matter how hard or long the trial, it could be *endured* and the *endurance* itself became a mark of character and greatness.

The Holy Spirit chose a compound word for *perseverance*. Literally it simply meant to live, remain or abide under something. We *persevere* when we do not leave, stop or remove ourselves from being under the trial, tribulation or circumstances that are pressuring us to quit or give up.

*“hupomeno... 2. to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee; troop. a. to persevere: absol. and emphatic. under misfortunes and trials to hold fast to one’s faith in Christ... b. to endure bravely, bear bravely and calmly: absol., ill-treatment...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5278)

*“hupomone... 1. steadfastness, constancy, endurance... in the NT the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings... 2. a patient, steadfast waiting for... 3. a patient enduring, sustaining...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5281)

*Perseverance* compels us to remain under any trial or tribulation. It leads us to continue serving the Lord even when pleasures, cares or riches seek to draw us away. There are several synonyms for *perseverance*. When we *endure* and *bear up* under trials, or when we are *steadfast* and *patient* in our service to the Lord we manifest *perseverance*.

It is this *perseverance* that we so admire in our Olympic contenders. The adversities they endure and overcome to gain the crown hold a powerful fascination to us. Every success story captivates our imagination as we learn of all the difficulties that had to be surmounted to gain victory. In the same way, Job, Moses, Elijah, Jesus and Paul captivate our imaginations with their *perseverance*.

Those who recognize the greatness of standing firm, taking another step and fighting on have the seeds to sow *perseverance*. Job’s entire life can be summed up under that heading. We know he was righteous and a great servant of God (*there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?*) (Job 1:8), but it was his *perseverance* that captures the imagination of the righteous. The book began with his character. God said *“I have no one like him in all the earth,”* but it became a forum on whether a man will love and respect God enough to lose everything and still give God honor, praise, and service. God had greatly blessed Job, protecting him both providentially and directly. Satan saw this and slandered Job. He accused Job of only serving God out of selfishness, not love. He did not believe Job could *persevere*.

*Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face. 1:10-11*

Job’s tribulations came suddenly and fiercely. He lost all his possessions, and all his children died in a single day. These losses crushed him, yet he maintained his honor and glorified God:

*And he said: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. Job 1:21-22*

Later, he lost his health, reputation and his wife’s comfort and support. All alone, in great sorrow and anguish, he listened as his three friends condemned him with false charges. He was left for weeks with no answers, no relief from suffering, and no comforter.

This is *perseverance*! Satan didn’t think he had it. God knew he did! God had no fear of leaving Job in this agony. Like many after him, the greater the adversity, the greater the glory and honor when it was endured. Job suffered for a purpose, though he did not know what it was. He proved to Satan and to all of us that a man can love God so much he would suffer any agony and adversity and still remain true to Him. When this captivates our own heart and we see the great value of endurance and steadfast conviction and commitment no matter what comes, we have taken the first steps toward adding *perseverance*.

## **Count it all Joy!**

This is exactly how James began his book. He wanted all servants of God to understand that the beginning of *perseverance* occurred when we feel a sense of joy at the prospect of having to endure trials, because we recognize their value.

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience(hupomone). 4 But let patience(hupomone) have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:2-6*

Enduring difficult circumstances test the depth and quality of our faith. Satan revealed his attitude toward God’s servants when he told God that if the tribulation were strong enough Job would fail



and his faith would falter. Job took the test in stride and never thought once about it. Yet Satan did win a victory over Job's wife. She did not have enough *perseverance* to even watch what Job had to endure. Yet Job rebuked her and sought to raise her back to full trust in God.

*Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Job 2:9-10*

Whatever happened, nothing reflected on God. God could be trusted and followed regardless of the trials and tribulations that arise. The truth is simple. Every good and perfect gift comes from God (Jas 1:16-18) and all evil comes either as a result of the curse of sin or the will of the devil either directly or through his servants. All things will still work together to those who love God and despite the tribulation, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Rom. 8:28; 31-39).

To fully understand the nature of *perseverance*, let's return to our Olympic contender. With great virtue to gain mastery and excellence, he finds his coach and learns what will be necessary for him to do. With self-control he completes the first day of training. Yet the next morning everything hurts. The muscles used the day before are screaming in protest against the kind of training he has embarked upon. He goes to the coach and explains his symptoms, wondering if he should go on or just quit. The coach would then explain that the pain is the true sign of growth. The harder the training and the more pain, the greater the growth and the quicker he can become a contender. From that point on all the trials and difficulties of his training regimen are looked upon with joy and fierce determination. They are the necessary steps to victory, glory and honor.

This is exactly what James revealed. All tribulations, trials and difficulties test our faith. All the good things we enjoy that seek to choke out the word are also tests of our faith. Finding ways to endure and conquer them is the joy of falling into these trials.

Just as the athlete sees a difficult training day as a challenge to joyfully begin, so also the servant of the Lord sees any trial or difficulty in the same light. Every setback only strengthens resolve and increases determination to never quit. The more trials we endure and overcome the greater the resolve and the stronger the determination, and the more difficulty we can endure. Our motivation for "*by perseverance doing good:*" "*glory, honor, immortality and eternal life!*"

*God, 6 who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 to those who by perseverance (hupomone) in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; Rom. 2:5-8*

Not all have the wisdom to see things in this light. If we are among those who lack this wisdom James encouraged us to ask of God in prayer and know that He will give it to us liberally.

## **We Rejoice in our Tribulations**

Paul charted exactly the same process, but began as Peter did with the grace and mercy of God that had placed us in the position where these trials could produce such wonderful fruit.

*Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation works perseverance 4 and perseverance approvedness; and approvedness, hope: Rom. 5:1-4*

Because "*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (2Pet. 1:3), we are now "*justified by faith,*" and "*have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" We feel great joy and rejoicing because of the *precious and exceeding great promises* He has given to us. After we add *perseverance*, it becomes the same joy that enters our heart when we begin a trial or tribulation. A polishing or sharpening stone takes a small amount of metal with each stroke, wearing it down. Yet it also polishes and sharpens the knife or sword. In exactly the same way tribulations polish and sharpen our character creating *perseverance*. Tribulation actually "*works*" *perseverance*.

*"katergazomai... a. to perform, accomplish, achieve [RV often work]... b. to work out... i.e. kto do that from which something results... bring about, result in,..." (Thayer, p. 339; 2716)*

All tribulations "*perform, accomplish, and achieve*" *perseverance*. They "*bring about*" and "*result in*" *perseverance*. Yet tribulations and trials not only bring about *perseverance*, but also

“approvedness” and hope.

“*dokimos* as an adj. both of person and object thus denotes a. “tested in battle,” “reliable,” “trustworthy,” b. a man who is “tested, significant, recognized, esteemed, worthy”... or an object which is tested, genuine or valuable... it is particularly used of metals,... (Kittel Vol. 2 p 255-256; 1382)

For the athlete, a hard and rigid workout tests him. He looks forward to it and enjoys its rigors and difficulties because it will prove him *reliable* and *worthy* on one hand and *tested* and *genuine* on the other. After Abraham passed the test of offering Isaac, God knew he was *reliable* and trustworthy because he had been *tested* and proven *genuine*. What joy Abraham must have felt.

*And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” Gen. 22:12*

Every tribulation we pass through does the same for us. It proved our faith is genuine and thus more precious than gold.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 1:6-8*

*Perseverance* brings joy at its beginning and at its end and thus determination to complete it while it is ongoing. As it begins we see it as a test that will polish, sharpen and strengthen our *perseverance*. As it ends, the *perseverance* leads into a sense of *approvedness* and *genuineness* to our character. Our faith has been tested and proven and is thus more precious than gold.

The Scriptures introduced a “*great cloud of witnesses*” who have already manifested *perseverance*. Now it is our turn to run our own race with *perseverance*. We too need that endurance that comes from the joy of knowing we are showing ourselves genuine and approved as they did.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with **endurance(hupomone)** the race that is set before 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him **endured(hupomeno)** the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has **endured(hupomeno)** such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart Heb. 12:1-3*

At the very pinnacle of *perseverance* stands Jesus. Jesus manifested *perseverance* in its greatest and most powerful value! He used it to face the cross and the hostility of sinners. He too felt that fierce joy of knowing the great good that would come from His enduring the cross.

No matter how difficult things become, God has high expectations of His people. As Job and Abraham before us, their *perseverance* led to *approvedness*, for they passed the test. By adding *perseverance* to our faith, we stand prepared. For we all have need of *endurance(perseverance)*.

*For you have need of endurance(hupomone), so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Heb. 10:36-39*

*If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small. Pr. 24:10*

The ability to be left in a terrible situation with no explanation and still do what needs to be done is *perseverance*. Like Paul, it keeps us doing good works year after year without growing weary.

*Therefore I endure(hupomeno) all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure(hupomeno), We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. 14 Remind them of these things 2Tim. 2:10-14*

# Godliness

One of the greatest blessings we can have in this life is to enjoy and find pleasure in the things God has asked us to do. When we naturally love and enjoy our spouse and find exciting challenges in our occupation, that life is greatly enhanced and bringing joy and fulfillment (Ecc. 2:24; 5:18-19; 9:9).

We all know this. Things become so much easier when we enjoy the time we spend at work and at home. When we feel contentment when it is time to go to work, looking forward to the day, and also feel anticipation when it is time to come home and be with our family we are happy indeed! Since most of our lives are taken up with work and family, if we enjoy them, we are truly blessed. When we enjoy and are challenged by our job and we love, respect and trust our mate, life reaches its pinnacle of enjoyment, contentment, and success.

## As the Deer Pants for the Water

This is exactly what *godliness* does for our service and work for God. *Godliness* is learning the joy and excitement of being a servant of God. *Godliness* leaves us feeling that everything God asked us to do is act of joy, a service of honor, or a challenge to manifest our respect and gratitude. When our love and devotion for God become the highest and most fulfilling part of our lives, we are prepared to become great servants for the Lord. When serving God becomes a passion that drives us we are adding *godliness*.

*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? Ps. 42:1-2*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, 5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Ps. 103:1-5*

*O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. 2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. 4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. Ps. 63:1-4*

What are the qualities that create a parallel between a deer panting for the water brook and our soul panting for God? How does a soul thirst for God? The answer is found in the longing desire we feel for God's favor, help and guidance. *Godliness* is based on need, appreciation for blessings, and joy. Just as a husband longs for his wife when he needs her, loves her and appreciates her. Just as a man enjoys his job because he needs it, gets satisfaction and esteem, and enjoys the challenges and successes. There is little difference in devotion to our spouse, devotion to our job and devotion to our God. When we realize how much better life is with them. How much more fulfilling and exciting life is when we share it. The authors of these Psalms felt a powerful need to please, honor, and serve God. They knew that everything they enjoyed was a gift from Him and they wanted to show their respect and gratitude with devotion and service.

It is gratitude and appreciation for God's help and our relationship with Him as both Creator and Redeemer that leads to "early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You." God created us with the need to love someone and to be loved by them. He created us with the need to respect others and to be respected by them. To love and respect God and to be loved and respected by God are the greatest blessings we can gain in life. That is why God's "lovingkindness is better than life." To live in such a way that God sees us as His own special people. There have been many such people in the Scriptures and God took note of their devotion and service to Him.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ☞ called Abraham His friend <u>Isa. 41:8</u>                       | ☞ David a man after His own heart <u>1 Sam. 13:14</u> |
| ☞ spoke to Moses face to face <u>Ex. 33:11</u>                     | ☞ Daniel was greatly beloved <u>Dan. 9:23</u>         |
| ☞ No one like him (Job) on the earth <u>Job 1:8</u>                | ☞ my beloved Son... I am well pleased <u>Mt. 17:5</u> |
| ☞ A meek and quiet spirit precious in His sight <u>1 Pet 3:3-6</u> |   |

*Godliness* is the intense need for God's favor and approval. We look to Him and think of His feelings before we do anything. At the end of each day we think about how God saw what we did that day. That's why Abraham was God's friend. It is what made David the man after God's own heart and Daniel greatly beloved. We too can learn to yearn for these things. We can learn to find great pleasure in going where God leads, being what God wants us to be, and wanting to do all God asks of us. All of this because we respect and love Him on the one hand and because they are right and in our best interests on the other.

## **The Real Meaning of Godliness**

The word Peter used to capture all of this is *godliness*.

*eusebeia*... from *eu*, well, and *seboimai*, to be *devout*, denotes the piety which, *characterized by a Godward attitude*, does that which is well-pleasing to Him... " (Vine, Vol 2 p. 162).

*eusebeia*... *reverence, respect; in the Bible piety towards God, godliness...*"(Thayer, p. 262; 2150)

*eusebes*... from *eu*, well, *seboimia* to reverence, the root *seb-* signifying *sacred awe*, describes *reverence* exhibited especially in actions, *reverence or awe well directed...* the *energy* which, *directed by holy awe* of God, finds expression in *devoted activity...* In the NT it is used of a pious attitude towards God, Acts 10:2,7..." (Vine vol 1, P. 308)

The essence of *godliness* is: "*sacred awe*," and "*reverence or awe well directed*." This sacred awe creates energy in the heart expressed by devoted acts. A *piety* and *reverence* toward God is "*characterized by a Godward attitude, doing what is well pleasing to him*." A godly person is always aware of God's presence, and as we sing in one of our songs, "*He speaks to me everywhere*." In the rustling grass, in an infant's smile, a budding rose, or a beautiful sunset. Our God is responsible for every joy and wonderful moment we have ever known. The godly never lose sight of this. *Bless the Lord O my Soul*.

## **Exercise yourself to Godliness**

God has opened a wonderful vista for those of us who are truly motivated to master *godliness*.

*7 ...exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 1 Tim 4:7-9*

Man's deep longing to be the best he can possibly be(*virtue*), has often settled on the functioning of the physical body. There are multitudes of activities man has created that need bodily exercise in order to excel. Thus Greeks created the Olympic games to fulfill this deep longing for excellence and honor from others. To stand before all the spectators with a crown and be cheered and honored was the pinnacle of glory for them, as it is for many today.

*And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 1Cor. 9:26*

Yet there is a grave limitation. It is a "*perishable crown*," and all "*bodily exercise profits a little*." No matter how well a sport is mastered few athletes win more than once. All exercise offers less and less returns as we age. God wanted His people to honor achievement and unlock the deep and powerful longing for perfection. But instead of wasting it on the skills of a body subject to death and decay, He wanted us to focus our efforts on enhancing the skills and abilities of the inward man.

*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. (NAS) 2 Cor. 4:16*

This is the essential reason why all effort placed on bodily exercise can only bring limited returns. It is simply not possible to retain bodily strength past the limits God placed upon it.

*The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Ps. 90:10*

As Paul noted, our outer man is decaying. But he did not lose heart. He simply changed his focus from the outer man and the body for the outer man to the inner man. At some point in our life as we see this truth we will change our emphasis from the material (**temporary**) to the spiritual

(**eternal**). The day we do this is the day our *godliness* and the exercises we do to gain *godliness* will become more important to us than anything else. *Godliness* begins when our priorities rest on the unseen realm where God dwells. When our importance in that realm is greater in our hearts than any honor or enjoyment here.

*while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor. 4:18*

The moment we begin to see the unseen and temporary for what it really and truly is will become the moment when we begin to add *godliness*. As Peter stated later in his second letter. When we finally begin to grasp the true significance of the *day of the Lord* and understand that all our effort and toil here is destined to be burned up and dissolved we will begin to see the true value of *holy conduct* and *godliness*.

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and **godliness**, 2 Peter 3:10-12*

Now **godliness** with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 1 Tim. 6:6-7

Godliness begins when our self esteem and worth come from spiritual things. When how God looks upon us is the most important thing in our life. When devotion and service to Him are the highest priority. All material things are temporary. They are going to dissolve, and we will carry nothing away. It is "*godliness with contentment*" that is our greatest gain. This won't happen without exercise. We have to learn to "*exercise toward godliness.*"

Paul used "*gumnazo*" from which comes our English, "*gymnasium.*" Those who go to the gym, are there to exercise. The exercises vary depending on the goal. A boxer, Olympic gymnast, runner, basketball player, swimmer or just to be fit and trim, all enter a gym with different expectations and different equipment needs. Some need a pool, others a weight room, or basketball court, while others need to a boxing ring or gymnastic equipment. Each sport has its own exercises that lead to its mastery. There are also spiritual exercises that lead to mastery of *godliness*.

### **Thanksgiving**

1Th. 5:18 In everything give thanks; this is God's will  
 Eph. 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things to God  
 Col. 3:15,17 Be thankful; give thanks to God the Father  
 Heb. 13:15 Let us continually offer sacrifice of praise the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name

### **Prayer:**

1Th. 5:17 Pray without ceasing  
 Col. 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer  
 Eph. 6:18 Pray always with all prayer  
 Rom. 12:12 Continuing steadfastly in prayer  
 1Pet. 4:7 Serious and watchful in your prayers.

### **A Vessel for Honor 2Tim. 2:20-22**

2Pet. 1:3-11 Diligently add to your faith  
 Gal. 5:22-23 Fruits of the Spirit  
 Eph. 6:10-16 Put on whole armor of God  
 Mt. 5:1-12 Blessed are . . .  
 Phil. 4:8 Think on these things  
 1Th. 5:20-21 Prove all things; hold fast to good; abstain from every form of evil."  
 Eph. 5:9 proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord

### **Worship in Spirit and Truth**

Heb. 10:24-25 Not forsaking our own  
 Jas. 1:19ff Swift to hear, trembling; Acts 2:42;  
 Eph. 5:19 Making melody in our hearts to the Lord  
 1Cor. 14:16 Saying AMEN with understanding-  
 1Cor. 11:23ff Discerning body in remembrance  
 2Cor. 9:7 Not grudging for God loves cheerful giver

### **Bible Reading and Meditation**

Read/Hear- Deut 6:6-9; 11:18-21; Jas 1:19-22  
 Meditate: Josh 1:8-9 Ps 1:1-2;  
 Eph. 1:18-19 Enlighten our heart with knowledge.  
 Pr. 23:23 Buy the truth, and do not sell it  
 2Tim. 2:15 Be diligent ... approved to God... rightly dividing the word of truth.

### **Love not the World 1 Jn 2:15-17**

Lk. 9:23 Deny yourself; Take your cross daily  
 Col. 3:5- Put to death members on the earth  
 Eph. 4:17-5:21 Put off old man / put on new  
 Gal. 5:19-21 Crucify the lusts of the flesh  
 Rom. 1:28-32 Don't consent with those who practice

So it is no different with *godliness*! Each of us will have to select the specific exercises to work with our character and needs. The goal is to get our senses exercised to discern good and evil, and to run with patience the race set before us. To fight the good fight, to finish to course and to keep the faith. God has given His people the specific equipment and exercises necessary to become proficient and ultimately a master at *godliness*.

*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses **exercised** to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:13-14*

*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, Heb. 12:1*

*I have **fought the good fight**, I have **finished the race**, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Tim. 4:7-8*

When these things lead us to “**Godward attitude that does what is well-pleasing to Him.**” we are exercising ourselves to *godliness*. When we grow in our *devotion* and *reverence*, and in our *sacred awe*, we are taking proper exercise. These are the things that It brought Cornelius’s prayers and alms as a memorial to God.

*There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout(*eusebes*) man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. ... 4And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?” So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Acts 10:1-4*

The second verse revealed four things that made him stand out. While many have given alms and prayed, Cornelius was devout(*godly*) and feared(reverenced, respected, and held in awe) God. It was his *godliness* and reverence that brought his prayers and alms as a memorial.

The “*sacred awe*,” of *godliness* creates energy in the heart leading to devoted acts of service. *Godliness* is the “**attitude behind the actions.**” The deeper our reverence, awe and respect the more *godliness*. It was a lack of awe and respect that led to the death of Nadab and Abihu.

*And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the LORD spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified. So Aaron held his peace. Lev 10:3*

A lack of reverence and awe, made it easy for them to add to God’s instructions. Those with a truly godly heart regard Him as too holy to do such a thing. They don’t want to be ashamed. Being diligent in doing exactly what He has revealed is also a godly exercise.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2Tim. 2:15-16*

*Godliness* is exercising ourselves to be aware of God’s presence every waking moment. We know He is watching, weighing assessing and remembering every thought, word and deed. We relish the opportunity to spend our days glorifying, honoring, respecting and serving Him. We know we can “grieve Him in His heart.” (Gen 6:5-6), if we become unfaithful, so we work ever harder to be true.

This is what brings deep and heartfelt repentance. Any failure leads us to run to Him with tears of repentance and sorrow. Sorrow because we disappointed Him. The *godly* are keenly aware of His watchful eye. It affects every activity of their life. This gives excitement, success and anticipation to every service. It is like the child who wants to do his best when his parents are watching him play sports. They know God is watching and with all their might they seek to honor, praise, and glorify their Creator who made them and gave them every joy in their life. We should relish the grace of God that brought salvation and *godliness* to us. So we deny ungodliness and live *godly*.

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Titus 2:11-13*

# **Brotherly Kindness**

## **At the Creation: The Family**

Of the many wonderful and beautiful things God created in the beginning, the family is often overlooked, yet is among His most precious gifts:

*And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Gen. 2:23-24*

After revealing that God had created Adam in a way that it was not good for him to be alone(2:18), God created the woman and gave them a 'one flesh' relationship which also included being a 'mother and father' and thus having children.

The emotions that tie this relationship together are the most tender and pleasant known to man. When a young couple are told they will have a baby, they are already in love with the child. This 'natural affection' forms the most important bonds of life and when joined to full submission to God's directions brings us to the greatest blessings of life. The love, devotion, and commitment a man and a woman are capable of giving to each other form the foundation of the family unit. Children raised by such people are greatly blessed. Those whose mother is a 'worthy woman' rise to call her 'blessed' (Pr. 31:28). The man who 'knows how to take care of his own household' and raises them 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord' (1 Tim. 3:4; Eph. 6:4), find that when they are old they do not depart from it (Pr. 22:6). Thus the full potential of the home to do good is defined. It gives both natural affection and the respect for authority that brings true *godliness*.

Such a nurturing family unit is as beautiful to behold as a golden sunset or a lovely spring day, and is productive of much more good. With parents who reverence God's will toward each other and their children, children are given the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual training that will carry them through a lifetime. This powerful and binding force of love, first given in marriage, and then transferred to each child as it is born binds this family together. These children in turn share it within their new family. In a close family, this natural affection spans time, distance, and adversity. There is a closeness and unity in sharing the same parents and upbringing that enhances the feelings brothers and sisters share.

## **Family Ties and Values in the Church**

God wants us to take the natural bond of affection, allegiance, and devotion in our family and bring it into the church. Every local church is God's family and should offer the same nurturing spiritually fertile soil for babe in Christ to grow in as infant children have in their home. When God's people add *brotherly kindness* to their faith, the church becomes such a nurturing family.

Yet there are obstacles we must be aware of. Many of us were not raised in the "perfect" home God designed. We do not all fully possess the feelings we could have. But whether we have 'natural affection' from the way we were raised, or by being transformed and renewing our mind(Rom. 12:1-3) they are the foundation upon which "brotherly love" or "brotherly kindness" rests. There is nothing in the Greek definition that enhances our understanding.

*"philadelphia... the love of brothers (or sisters), brotherly love... In the N. T. the love which Christians cherish for each other as "brethren"..." (Thayer, p. 653; 5360)*

Brotherly kindness comes from the Greek term *philadelphia*, a compound word made up of *love* and *brother*. So translated it means exactly the same in English. With this term, God expects us to bring all the emotions and qualities of the family into the church. In revealing the work of Jesus in redemption and salvation, God used the family to help explain the fullness of what Jesus did.

*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Gal. 4:4-5*

Everyone who is born again is adopted into the family of God. As each of us becomes God's children, we also become God's family. All who obey the gospel and accept Jesus as the Son of God are in the family of God.

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: John 1:12*

All that Jesus accomplished with His death on the cross not only brought salvation and forgiveness, but the right to child of God and to be adopted into the family of God. After we are baptized, even Jesus is not ashamed to be called our brother and accept us as His brethren.

*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb 2:10-11*

## **As many as were baptized... are Abraham's Seed**

The family relationship we all share in the church began with Abraham. God had promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations. God performs a power similar to the birth of Isaac when we are baptized. We become Abraham's seed. Children of promise, just like Isaac!

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. 29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Gal. 3:27, 29*

*Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. Gal. 3:7*

*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. Gal. 4:28*

That Abraham is our father and Sarah is our mother is a truth emphasized again and again in the Scriptures. All who follow after and seek for righteousness must look to Abraham.

*"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. 2 Look to **Abraham your father**, and to **Sarah who bore you**; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him." Isa 51:1-2*

Although this passage is directed initially to Israel, it has all been given to the church.

*1 What then shall we say that **Abraham our father** has found according to the flesh? ... 11 that **he might be the father of all those who believe**, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and **the father of circumcision** to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which **our father Abraham** had while still uncircumcised. .... 16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure **to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all** Rom 4:1, 11-12, 16-17*

*as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, **whose daughters you are** if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. 1 Peter 3:6*

These truths are the foundation of our *brotherly kindness*. We are all the children of God, the seed of Abraham, the children of promise. Jesus is our brother, God is our Father and we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Abraham is our father and Sarah is our mother and we are blessed with faithful Abraham. These are not just doctrinal truths to believe. They are the foundation of our spiritual family relationship, which can bring great blessings. It can bring a sanctifying influence like the holy oil that sanctified Aaron, and like the dew and rain that comes down upon the soil and brings great blessings.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing — Life forevermore. Ps 133:1-3*

But none of this will happen until we take all these facts and create our new family. What God made by grace, we must believe and put forth every effort to make a reality in each local church. This is what we do to add *brotherly kindness*. As we understand these truths, the same *brotherly kindness* we had in our fleshly family will naturally form in our heart for those in our spiritual family.

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ... 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Rom. 12:10,13*

In this verse the Spirit encouraged us to be "kindly affectionate" to each other:



*“philostorgos... The mutual love of parents and children; also of husbands and wives), loving affection, prone to love, loving tenderly... “ Thayer p 655; 5387*

Again family ties are the focus. The church is to see itself as the family of God and give each member the tender loving care of brothers and sisters. All these passages develop the idea of *brotherly kindness(philadelphia)* in different ways, expanding our understanding of how we add it and how we live it.

*But concerning **brotherly love** you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; 1Th. 4:9-10*

*Honor all people. **Love the brotherhood.** Fear God. Honor the king. 1Pet. 2:17*

*Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by **your brotherhood** in the world. 1Pet. 5:9*

*Let **brotherly love** continue. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. 3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them-- those who are mistreated-- since you yourselves are in the body also. Heb. 13:1-3*

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere **love of the brethren**, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 1Pet. 1:22-23*

All purified souls have obeyed the truth, and are commanded to love one another fervently with a pure heart.

*Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; **love as brothers**, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 1 Pe.t 3:8-9*

By having the same mind and feeling compassion for one another, the church is prepared to love as brethren. This is accomplished when everyone in the church feels tenderhearted toward one another, all are courteous and kind, and no one seeks to repay the slights and disappointments that sometimes come.

Any strong family is based on the commitment of the husband and wife to love each other and each child through all the adversities of life. So also each local church is strengthened by the commitment of all her members to let *brotherly kindness* reign in the church.

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# Love

This is the final term in Peter's list of "*these things*" that we are to add to our faith. It is different from the other six. They are specific qualities, with a beginning and an end. *Love* has neither. *Love* is the biggest thing in the Bible and may actually be bigger than the Bible.

There are several reasons why we are forced to conclude this. First, *love* encompasses the entire Old Covenant Scriptures.

*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? 37 And He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets. Mt. 22:36-40*

*Love* is big enough to enfold every command in the Old Covenant. All that was written in the Law and the Prophets "depend/hang/suspend" from it. We can sum up the entire Old Testament under the commands to *love* God and *love* our neighbor. *Love* is also greater than faith and hope.

But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love," 1Cor. 13:13

*Love* is the bond of perfection that binds all the other tender emotions into a perfect unity. All that is wholesome and good in our character is bound and held together with *love*.

*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. Col. 3:12-15*

But what makes love bigger than all these things is the truth that God is love, and that if we do not love, we cannot know God.

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1Jn. 4:8)*

For the Holy Spirit to elevate *love* to a position so high reveals its greatness and immensity. *Love* is from God! Those who *love* are born of God and know God. Since there is no other source for *love*, we must first be born of Him before we too can love. Those who do not *love* do not know God because God is *love*! It is difficult to wrap our minds around this concept. It is simply too big.

Yet our attempt to understand and know this *love* is doomed to failure because it truly is beyond our comprehension! No matter how much we know about *love*, it is still just a tiny portion of all that is involved in it.

*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. Eph. 3:17-19*

There is something very special about this *love*! Those who set their hearts to acquire it enter the path leading to all the fulness of God! Since God is *love*, the more *love* we have, the better we will understand Him and the more like Him we become. We must root and ground ourselves in this *love*, seek to know its breadth, length, height and depth. Searching for the elusive understanding of the fullest depths of the *love* of Christ, even though it surpasses knowledge!

It was the *love* and devotion of Jesus Christ, both to God and man that illustrated its fullness. The selfishness of sinful man, with our marred spiritual image could never comprehend the sacrifices true unselfish devotion and concern for others will do. It was Jesus' *love* that brought Him from heaven, caused Him to agonize in the garden and writhe in pain on the cross. These acts of loving sacrifice gave God the means to give us a "new" commandment:

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Jn. 13:34-35*

What does Jesus mean when He reveals this command as being new? This word is only used for things that are unused or fresh. Things that are recently made.

*“kainos... new, i.e. a. as respect form; recently made, fresh, recent, unused, unworn...”* (Thayer, p. 317; 2537)

Jesus gave a brand new command. One never given before because it could not have been given before Jesus came. Before Jesus revealed *agape-love*, God was limited on how He could ask us for love. He could command man to *love* Him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. He could command us to *love* our neighbor as ourselves. But both of these are very limited for they are subjective commands. Whatever we can comprehend as love is the highest standard available. In these commands man compares his *love* for God with his own strength, mind, heart and soul and his *love* for others with his *love* for himself. Jesus “*new*” command is different. God can now command us to *love* “*even as*” Jesus loved us.

*“kathos,... 2. according as i.e. in proportion as, in the degree...”* (Thayer, p. 314; 2531).

Although we cannot fully comprehend it, we can now use an objective standard outside ourselves. The *love* God wants us to add to our faith must be in proportion to Jesus’ *love*. As we grow to understand the *love* of Christ, we can begin practicing it’s fullness and depth. This is also why we need knowledge and discernment to practice *love* properly. We just can’t figure out love without precise and exact directions.

*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, Phil. 1:9*

Without a precise and correct knowledge, joined with the wisdom to see things clearly (discernment) it is impossible for this *love* to grow and abound. There is a great deal more to it than man in his natural state can comprehend. This *love* rises far above any of the notions and understandings that exist in this world! Without this knowledge we can only *love* others as we *love* ourselves and we can only *love* God with our heart, soul, and mind! But we cannot *love* “*even as*” He did.

### **Three Words into One**

English speaking Christians have an additional hurdle to cross in our path to a full mastery of *love*. English gives us only one word for *love* in all its forms. Jesus could choose from four Greek terms. *philos* (affectionate *love*), *storge* (family *love*), *eros* (sensual *love*) [Jesus and His apostles never used this term], and *agape/agapao*. With only one word in English we have to stretch and expand it, or create a new term and use it to define and understand its requirements.

When we read “*love*” in the NT we must learn to separate, either by context or by word definition which of these ideas is meant. Though *eros* is not used in the NT, *storge*, *philos* and *agape* are. Each has it’s own specific meaning and was selected by the Spirit to reveal that idea. *agape love* is a very different *love* than the others. It is *agape-love* God asked us to add to our faith. *agape*, rises far above *storge* (family affection), and *philos* (personal interest and enjoyment). It is a pure spiritual ideal rising above the others. Even the original use of *agape* only offered a shadow of what God forged it to mean in Scripture.

*“agape,...a purely bibl. and eccl. word... affection, good-will, love, benevolence:..* (Thayer, p. 4-5; 26)

*agape/agapao* is a purely biblical and ecclesiastical word! This means it has little history outside the Bible. It’s definition is based entirely on how the Spirit used it in the NT Scriptures.

*“agapao* and the corresponding noun *agape*... present “the characteristic word of Christianity, and since the Spirit of revelation has used it to express ideas previously unknown, enquiry into its use, whether in Greek literature or in the Septuagint, throws but little light upon its distinctive meaning in the N.T... (Vine Vol. 3 p. 20-21)

Basically, there are three expressions for love in pre-biblical Greek: *eran*, *philein*, and *agapan*. 1. *eran* is passionate love which desires the other for itself. In every age the Greeks sung glowing hymns to sensually joyous and demonic *eros* ... *philein/philia* on the contrary, signifies for the most part the inclination or solicitous love of gods for men, or friends for friends. ... In the word *agapan* the Greek finds

nothing of the power or magic of *eran* and little of the warmth of *philein*. Its etymology is uncertain, and its meaning weak and variable. Often it means no more than “to be satisfied with something... But whereas *eros* consistently engages the thinking of poets and philosophers from Homer to Plotinus, *agapan* hardly ever emerges as a subject of radical deliberation. It is indeed striking that the substantive *agape* is almost completely lacking in pre-biblical Greek. (Kittel TDWNT; 26)

What these scholars are telling us is that Greeks, like most of humanity treasured the selfish misuse of others for their own pleasure more than the sacrifice of self in order to please others. *eros/eran* gave them the right to indulge in whatever pleasures they desired regardless of the cost to others. This captivated the minds of the poets and the worldly. Even *phileo/philia* centers primarily on man’s pleasure. When Greeks loved something with *phileo/philia* whether it be a hobby, a job, a car or even a wife, they meant that it gave them pleasure and enjoyment. The moment it stopped giving them pleasure they no longer loved it and it could and often was discarded. The magical intensity of *eros* and the warmth and fulfillment of *phileo/philia* captivated them.

But there was none of this is *agape*. It didn’t really even have a meaning to them for its use is “weak and variable” and hardly used at all. The “substantive *agape* is almost completely lacking in pre-biblical Greek.”

Jesus took *agape*, dusted it off, and used it to describe the greatest single quality Christianity offered! Greater than faith and the bond of perfection, it is used over 250 times in the NT. The Holy Spirit found great uses for it. A lifetime of effort and toil must be put forth to grasp it’s vast height, depth, length and breadth! For it is not of this world!

It’s first use in John manifested it’s wonderful power and might. It was the force behind God’s sending Jesus to save the world.

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Jn. 3:16*

God wrote this to help us see His own attitude and feeling toward fallen man. Though it took the gift of His own Son’s life to redeem us, God’s *agape* did it. This is the demonstration of His love:

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Rom. 5:8,10*

God’s love made great sacrifices for man’s needs, even for those who would never appreciate or use it. This is the essence of *agape love*. It considers only the needs and well being of others, not what might be gained in return. It makes great sacrifices for the needs of those with nothing to give in return! Even those who are trying to harm or hurt.

*You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.... 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Mt. 5:43-45, 48*

If we are adding God’s great *agape love* to our faith, then we must rise above the selfish notions of this world. Such a love must reach out to the entire human race, and be willing to sacrifice to the degree that Jesus did on the cross. If we seek the perfection of our Heavenly Father, our love must grow to be “even as” that of His only begotten Son. This is what we are adding to our faith.



# agape/agapao - The Love of Christ

God used *agape-love* to describe the greatest qualities we can strive for in this life leading to all the fullness of God. It is a unifying bond tying all other virtues into a cohesive force of perfection (Col. 3:14). It is the highest pinnacle of spiritual growth and maturity with a magnitude so great that only after Jesus came could God fully explain it. Even with Jesus' example plainly before us, it still exceeds man's knowledge and comprehension (Eph. 3:19)!

God urged us to seek it. It is a wonderful quality filled with beauty and holiness. It brings out the highest and most noble side of human nature. To master this divine *love*, we must "know the *love* of Christ." For only with this can we be *filled with all the fulness of God*. When we learn how He *loved* we learn to *love*. From Jesus leaving heaven to His great sacrifice on the cross He manifested the sacrificial power and noble character of *love*. He showed man how much one can willingly sacrifice for others. Jesus spent His final night with His disciples summing up *agape/agapao love*. While the Greeks seldom used it, John used them 32 times to describe the events of that evening. As the night began, the Holy Spirit explained the intent and goal of Jesus:

*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. Jn. 13:1*

All Jesus had done for His disciples is summed up with *agapao-love*. It was His *love* for His own that motivated the words and events of the evening, carrying Him through the agony in the garden of Gethsemane and ending on the cross. "He *loved* them to the end." Jesus, both in example and teaching is expressing *agape-love*. It was this *love* that led to Him wash their feet. He was teaching the humble and sacrificial nature of this *love*. When Peter protested that He was unworthy of such *love*, he showed a lack of knowledge about His teacher. Jesus sternly warned him that he must learn this lesson or cease to be a disciple! Helping others no matter how humbling the service is the essence of *love*. Peter must learn this! The foot washing will pale in a few hours when Jesus is mocked, scorned, scourged and crucified for them. But the principle is the same. He hoped they would all learn from this example and do it!

*"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Jn. 13:17*

Whatever sacrifices are necessary to help others is an integral part of *love*. As the evening continues, He further elaborated on this *agapao-love*.

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you so love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. Jn. 13:34-35*

In using "new"-*kainos*, Jesus compelled them to think of *love* in a new way. This is a brand new command, fresh and never before given. They were to *love* each other to the same degree that Jesus had and was continuing to *love* them. As disciples learn more of Jesus' *love*, they will direct it to their brethren. Not long after giving this command, He carefully explained the proper expression of this *love* toward brethren. The heart of *agape-love* is keeping Jesus' commands and word!

*If you love Me, keep My commandments. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Jn. 14:15,21*

*Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. Jn. 14:23-24*

There is a close and unbreakable union between loving Jesus and submissive obedience to Him. A disciple who is not keeping Jesus' commandments and word faithfully has no *agapao-love*. To *love* Jesus to the degree of His new command requires a great deal more of a disciple than occasional warm feelings in the heart. There must be an absolute commitment to keeping His word at all cost. There is a loyalty in this *love*, a fidelity and a commitment. He offered no middle ground!

This *love* required that Jesus' needs be placed above our own and our will be placed under His. He illustrated the degree of this commitment with His own example.

*I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here. Jn. 14:30-31*

Jesus was well aware of the conflict about to burst upon Him. The devil would seek to destroy Him and fail. But it would be an agonizing experience that would cost Jesus His life. His agonizing plea in the garden expressed His own desires. He did not want to experience it. But His *love* for God was greater than His *love* for Himself. He willingly submitted to God's commands because He *loved* God.

This showed a sinful and selfish world what unselfish devotion to God can accomplish. Jesus sacrificed all His needs and desires for His Father's command and the world's need. This is what *love* always does:

*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. Jn. 15:9-10*

The term "as" describes proportion and degree. Jesus tells His disciples that He has *loved* them to the same degree that God *loved* Him. If disciples want to abide in that same *love*, they must *love* Him to that same degree. They must keep His commands just as Jesus kept God's. When disciples grasp and practice this *love* they will keep Jesus' commands with the same zeal, determination, and sacrifice as He did.

Only human selfishness will set aside God's commands to fulfill their own selfish desires. The more *love* a disciple has for God, the closer to God's commands he will walk, and the more his mind will be consumed with God's will for his life. Having stressed this devotion to God, He returned again to how this will affect the disciple's attitudes toward one another.

*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. Jn. 15:12-14*

The sacrificial nature of *agapao*-love is again illustrated by the Lord. It goes far beyond a *love* that only gives what is convenient. It rises far above minor inconvenience. This is a *love* that will sacrifice everything if there is a need! There is no greater *love* than giving one's life for His friends. This is the sacrificial *love* Jesus gave His disciples, and now expected them to share among themselves. John wrote further about this many years later.

*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1Jn. 3:16*

All disciples learn of *love* because He laid down His life for us. If we have properly learned this lesson we will feel the same way Jesus did, and laying down our lives for our brethren will not seem too grievous a burden. If we truly *love* God and His Son Jesus Christ, then we will hold the same feelings toward our brethren that they did.

*And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. 1Jn. 4:21*

Every disciple who truly *loves* God will also *love* his brethren. There can be no distinctions in this *agape*-*love*. It offers full devotion to God, Jesus Christ, the members of the church, and all others who need it. This *love*, which God commanded us to add to our faith(2Pet. 1:7) will create great changes in the priorities of life. There will be a continual widening concern covering those we are commanded to *love*. Our focus will shift away from our own needs and interests and more toward the needs of others.

*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil. 2:4*

Those who share Christ's *love* continue to grow in their concern toward and desire to sacrifice for others:

*For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose 2Cor. 5:14-15*



True *agapao*-love becomes so unselfish that those who possess it can no longer live only for themselves. It compels them to imitate Jesus. He died for all so we would stop living only for ourselves and begin living only for Him. His final prayer before entering Gethsemane records these wonderful words:

*And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." Jn. 17:26*

Truly Jesus loved His own to the very end! He declared the glorious Name of His Father to them. All of this had a great goal and purpose. That the *love* which God had *loved* Jesus might be created within the hearts of all disciples. So that the church would be filled with those who *love* as Jesus *loved*. The true definition of *agape/agapao* love is given by the Spirit through Paul.

*Love suffers long and is kind;  
love does not envy;  
love does not parade itself,  
is not puffed up;  
does not behave rudely,  
does not seek its own,  
is not provoked,  
thinks no evil;*

*does not rejoice in iniquity,  
but rejoices in the truth;  
bears all things,  
believes all things,  
hopes all things,  
endures all things.  
Love never fails.  
1Cor. 13:4-8*

This is God's definition of love. It is how He feels about us, how He wants us to feel about Him and how He wants us to treat one another. It gives us the scope of what Jesus had in mind when He commanded His disciples to love one another as He had loved them. Loving to the same degree and in the same manner as Jesus requires all the above. First we learn the meaning of each term and phrase. Then after we memorize and understand what God's expectations are, we begin to master them. But all efforts put forth offer God's greatest blessings. Love makes us like Him, and those who truly love will enhance the church they attend. They will be a blessing to their friends and to their families. Those under it's power are meet for the Master's use.

Love is unselfish devotion. It is the broadening of our circle of concern to an ever widening group. The qualities listed above are the proof we have it.



# If These things are Yours (Conclusion)

Before concluding, I believe it is wise for us to carefully consider the implications of this passage. Through inspiration, Peter made it clear that there are great blessings if we add these seven things to our faith and serious consequences if we do not. In this sense, this passage is similar to Israel standing before Mt Ebal and Mt Gerazim.

*“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known. 29 Now it shall be, when the Lord your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Deut. 11:26-30*

There are wonderful blessings to be given to those who are diligent and work to add all of the things Peter wanted us to add to our faith. There are terrible consequences if we do not.

*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2Pet. 1:5-11*

## They Make you to Be

*“If these things are yours and abound...”* is the conditional bridge joining our toil to God’s promises. If *these things* (virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness brotherly kindness and love) *“are”* ours, then the blessings offered in the passage will also be ours. Peter selected a term used much less than the usual verb of being *“is.”* This term is also more intensive.

*“hup-archo... 1. to begin below to make a beginning; universally, to begin... 2. to come forth, hence to be there, be ready, be at hand... something is mine, I have something... 2Pet. 1:8 ...”* (Thayer p. 638; 5225)

This word emphasized the degree of possession. These things are not put on and put off at will. No matter what our mood or the company we keep, these things are unaffected. They begin below the surface deeply within our soul. They are a natural part of our character, reflecting the divine nature growing within. They are *mine, ready* and *always at hand* to be used. The Spirit also described the degree and level of possession.

*“pleonazo... used of one possessing, to superabound...to have over... to exist in abundance ... R.V. be multiplied...”* (Thayer, p. 516; 4121)

This is clearly a very specific conditional promise. It is not just being aware of these things in the sense of knowing what they are. It is not just having them to a limited degree that comes from hearing a sermon on them every few years. This is full possession in abundance. Each quality is not only continually within our grasp, but abundantly so. Since *“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”* (2Cor. 9:6), it is evident that those who will receive the blessings are those who have sowed bountifully. Only when we have an abundance of these in our possession does the conditional *“...you will be”* begin:

*“kathistemi... to set, place, put... a. to set one over a thing... b ...to appoint one to administer an office ... d. to constitute... to render, make, cause to be...”* (Thayer, p. 314; 2525)

God has made our diligent toil on *“these things”* to *“render” “make”* and *“cause”* what follows. When we mold our character as God demands we are *“appointed”* by these things to be busy and fruitful. Since it is God who decides who to use in what circumstances, He is simply revealing to us what we must be in order for Him to use us. This is very similar to Paul’s words to Timothy.

*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 2Tim. 2:20-22*

If we want to be useful and prepared, *“these things”* described by Peter will do it. If *these things* are abundantly in our possession then they will appoint us in the sight of God to be a vessel for honor

and He will choose us. Just as Jesus chose His apostles, and God chose Noah and Abraham, so the Spirit reveals here that if we want God to see us as ready to be used and we want to be busy in His kingdom then this is the fastest and most direct way to get prepared.

If we have “*these things*” we will never be *barren*:

*“argos... (from alpha privative and ergon without work, without labor, doing nothing), inactive, idle; (a.) free from labor, at leisure... (b.) lazy, shunning the labor which one ought to perform ... (c.) of things from which no profit is derived, although they can and ought to be productive; as of fields, trees, gold and silver, ... unprofitable ...”* (Thayer, p. 72: 692)

If we do these things we will never hear “*you wicked and slothful servant.*” We will not be unprofitable and our faith will not be dead/barren (Jas 2:20). God promised that just by doing these things we will be busy. Just having these things will in themselves make us to be *not idle*. To possess these things in abundance will bring “*Well done! good and faithful servant.*”

Not only will we never be idle when we ought to be productive, but we won’t be unfruitful either.

*“akarpos... without fruit, barren;... 2... not yielding what it ought to yield... destitute of good deeds,...”* (Thayer, p. 21; 175)

The toil put forth to master these seven virtues will lead to a rich and abundant harvest. A harvest of much fruit with which to glorify God.

*“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit... 8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. Jn. 15:1-2, 8*

The Spirit promised that those who add to their faith the seven things Peter listed will have a busy, productive and fruitful life in the knowledge of their Lord. There will be no regrets.

## **He that Lacks These Things**

In the next verse we are given a terrible consequence that comes upon those who do not add these things to their faith.

*For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 2Pet. 1:9*

The term *lack* is actually made up of *not* and *in possession*.

*“pareimi ... a. to be by, be at hand, to have arrived, to be present: .... b. to be ready, in store, at command:... (Thayer ; 3918)*

Those who don’t have these things *at hand*, for they *have not arrived* and *are not present*. If they are *not yet ready* and *not yet at our command*. Then those Christians are *shortsighted* even to “*blindness*.”

*“muopazo... to see dimly, see only what is near...”* (Thayer p 420; 3467)

*“tuphlos... (tuphoo to raise a smoke; hence prop. “darkened by smoke”), blind... b. mentally blind...”* (Thayer, p. 633; 5185)

Christians who lack (virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love) are incapable of seeing life in it’s full richness and purpose. They are in a fog, a haze keeping them from seeing things clearly. Those with them see so much more:

*while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2Cor. 4:18*

This is how faithful Christians view life. Only those who are shortsighted even to blindness see it otherwise. This is a progressive blindness, which finally ends when all benefits of Christianity are completely forgotten and the joy of salvation disappears. It is difficult to imagine how anyone could forget, but God warned that this is real danger faces all who refuse to add to their faith.

Because of the manner in which Peter revealed these things, this conclusion is obvious. Since the motivations to add these things was based on the divine power of God to give us life and godliness and the precious and exceeding great promises that have led to our salvation, if we did nothing with

this motivation, it could only be because we have forgotten the joy of our salvation. The motivation that should have led to an abundance of these things have come to nothing. It is therefore logical and the Spirit makes the connection that we have forgotten the primary motivation.

## **Make your Call and Election Sure**

*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble 2Pet. 1:10*

This is another very precious and exceeding great promise. By doing these things we will stabilize both our calling and election. These two words form a very important part of our hope. Our calling came when we heard and obeyed the gospel.

*"klesis... 1. a calling, calling to, ... 2. a call, invitation: to a feast... in the N.T. everywhere in a technical sense, the divine invitation to embrace salvation in the kingdom of God, which is made esp. through the preaching of the gospel:..." (Thayer, p. 329-350; 2821)*

The word simply means an *invitation* or being *called* for something. Since Paul revealed that God called us through the gospel and the church is the called out, our calling is synonymous with obeying the gospel.

*But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Th. 2:13-14*

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, Eph. 4:1*

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1Pet. 2:9-10*

*For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 1Cor 1:26-29*

The term election is very similar to our calling. But it is unique in its timing. God did his electing before the foundation of the world, but we cast the deciding vote and became the elect after we were called. The term election simply means that we were chosen.

*"ekloge...election, choice...a. the act of picking out, choosing..."(Thayer p. 197; 1589)*

God's choice came before the creation or foundation of the world.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, Eph 1:3-5*

As God crafted the gospel, He made some important decisions about how He would develop the gospel to draw only those whom He sought to be with Him in eternity. As Paul stated to the Corinthians, it was the things God chose (foolish, weak, base, despised) that determined the quality of people who would come. So God chose, elected and called a class of people.

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Rom 8:28-30*

God wanted all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth and He created the gospel to bring out those things. When the gospel is preached God is inviting and calling.

*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim 2:3-5*

Since God wanted all to be saved, He voted for everyone and wanted to choose everyone. But only those who obey the gospel are the elect because like all elections we have to receive enough votes to be elected. God cast one vote and we cast the deciding vote. We are called and elected when we obey the gospel. God elected us before the foundation of the world and we cast the deciding vote and became the elect of God after we obeyed the gospel.

But the problem with both the calling and election centers on us. God will never change His mind, but we can change our mind. Jesus warned: "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*" Mt. 22:14

Peter made a very precious promise, both our call and our elections are made "sure" when we diligently and with haste add on our part. When these things are in our possession in abundance, we make our call and election "sure."

*"bebaios... stable, fast, firm... metaph. sure, trusty..."* (Thayer p 99)

All who fulfill the conditions here make their call to salvation and their election to eternal life stable, fast, and firm. It becomes unshakable. This is one of the greatest promises in the Scriptures brethren! It is ours for the taking. Lest we fear we are reading too much into this, He gives a further explanation.

## **If you do These Things you will Never Stumble**

In order to solidify our understanding of how stable and firm our call and election becomes, the Spirit revealed that by doing *these things*, we can never stumble.

*"ptaio... 1.to cause one to stumble or fall... 2. to stumble... a. to err, to make a mistake, b. to fall into misery, become wretched..."* (Thayer, P. 556; 4417)

The word *stumble* is only used three other times in the NT. Carefully consider each of them lest we see too much or not enough in this promise.

*I say then, have they **stumbled** that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! Rom. 11:11-12*

*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet **stumble** in one point, he is guilty of all. Jas. 2:10-11*

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all **stumble** in many things. If anyone does not **stumble** in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Jas. 3:1-3*

In the first the Spirit described the fall of Israel after crucifying Jesus. In the second, the breaking of any law that made one guilty of all is *stumbling*. In the third, it is the sinful use of the tongue. There can be no doubt from these three passages that this is a fatal *stumbling*. If we will keep in abundant possession the seven things listed here and continue to add them our entire Christian life then God has promised that these things alone will protect us so we will never *stumble* in this way.

Hence our eternal destiny is based on our efforts to add! What a precious promise! We have the means to insulate and protect ourselves from all harm! This passage offers great security! But it is security based on completely mastering and living the seven things above. God has done His part for all! When we do our part we can never stumble!

## **An Entrance Abundantly Supplied**

*for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Pet 1:11*

By fulfilling Peter's words in the exact way previously described we will have everything we need to enter the eternal kingdom. This is the manner and the means by which it will be accomplished. The parable of the ten virgins and the talents both reveal that preparations must be made to enter. We must trade and make gain and have our lamps trimmed with enough oil to keep them burning. Using those parables as our background, adding these seven things to our faith is trading and making gain. Having them in our possession in abundance is the oil the virgins needed. Whatever is necessary to be allowed entrance into the eternal kingdom will be abundantly supplied to us by

adding these seven things to our faith.

We *supply* the virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. God then richly and abundantly *supplies* our entrance into heaven. By using the same word for “*supply*” He shows how closely they are tied together. You supply your part, and God will richly supply His!

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (Mt 25:34).”

Never forget:

*in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, Titus 1:2*

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