

"YOUR FAITH"
2 Peter 1:1-5

Intro: During the next few Sunday nights I want to speak to you from 2 Peter 1 about "your faith." You will find that expression in verse 5 of this chapter where Peter said, "Add to your faith...."

Peter used this expression three times in 1 Peter 1. See verses 7, 9, 21.

1 Peter 1:21 makes it clear that by saying, "your faith," Peter was not talking about a faith that originated with them, but a faith that was only possible through Christ, or as "the gift of God," as Paul said in Eph. 2:9. But it was their faith because they were genuine believers in Christ.

In 2 Peter 1:1 Peter called it a "like precious faith with us" which they had "obtained." The idea is that it had been assigned to them; they had received it. It was a "precious faith" because of its value. No amount of money can buy it. And it is the only way that this salvation can be obtained. By calling it "like precious faith with us" he meant that it was just as precious as the faith of the apostles. It also meant that in order to be saved like the apostles were saved you had to believe what the apostles believed.

Peter was as certain as he could be of another's faith that they did believe, although he did exhort them to make sure of their election in verse 10. But to "have obtained like precious faith with us" is the equivalent of saying that they had obtained the same salvation, and it was "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

So Peter was addressing believers, and he wrote to communicate with them about their faith, or, as he called it, "your faith."

God does not have one way of salvation for apostles, and then another way for people who are not apostles. There is only one way of salvation regardless of what other differences we might have: young and old, male and female, Jew and Gentile, master and servant. Everyone who is saved has been saved the same way: through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, we need to learn that being saved is not the end, but it is only the beginning. We are as saved as we ever will be the moment the Lord saves us, but there are many changes that need to be made in us before the work of salvation is finally completed. And no one knew that any better than the Apostle Peter. The needs that he saw in the

lives of the Lord's people were needs that he had seen in his own life. And so he wanted every Christians to know that they needed to go on from the beginning to the end when either the Lord comes, or we are called "home." Peter began his epistle on this note, and he concluded it on the same note, although he used difference words. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:18. Here in the first chapter he told them that there were seven things that each one of continually needs to be adding to our faith. They are listed in verses 5 through 7.

This explains at least in part why he wrote what he did in verses 12 through 15 of chapter 1.

You and I are not yet the finished product. There is still much more that needs to be done in my heart, and much more that needs to be done in your heart. I hope that the Lord will make our consideration of these things that need to be added very profitable for all of us.

Before we get to those things which we need to be concerned about, let us see tonight how he approached the subject. To help to write it upon your mind and heart, I want to give you five words beginning with the letter "P" to describe the main point that Peter was making in each of these verses. Here they are:

- 1) Persons (v. 1).
- 2) Prayer (v. 2).
- 3) Power (v. 3).
- 4) Promises (v. 4).
- 5) Practice (v. 5; actually verses 5-7).

So let us consider these in order.

I. PERSONS (2 Pet. 1:1).

We have Simon Peter, on the one hand, and "them that have obtained like precious faith" on the other hand. We have an apostle writing to his fellow-believers. Or, we have one child of God writing to other children of God.

It is always important in Scripture to determine who was speaking, and to whom he was speaking--as well as what did he say (but this latter point will not be our concern for now).

We have a message here that was originally sent to Jewish believers, as we learn from 1 Peter 1:1, 2. But, as I said earlier, Jews and Gentiles are all saved in the same way, through Christ, so this is just as much for us as Gentile believers as it was for Jewish believers.

Let me mention one other thing about Simon Peter, and the

fact that he was "a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ," especially as an apostle.

Paul said in his epistle to the Ephesians that the church is "built upon the foundation...." (Eph. 2:20). Therefore, since this is the writing of an apostle, the Apostle Peter, we have in this epistle a writing of the highest possible authority. Peter wrote these two epistles which bear his name under the authority and direction of the Spirit of God. Therefore, we cannot take his message lightly. It has come to us through Peter directly from God Himself!

Secondly,

II. PRAYER (2 Pet. 1:2).

Peter was the one who prayed; those who shared his faith were the ones for whom he was praying.

Believers need prayer. And especially do they need this prayer. Peter prayed for the saints like Paul prayed for the saints. And this is important for every pastor to see, every elder, every deacon, every parent, every Sunday School teacher. Our teaching is not going to amount to anything without prayer, much prayer, continual prayer.

(Comment on Power Through Prayer, by E. M. Bounds.)

Peter knew that it was only through prayer that his instructions to the Jewish believers in that day would be accepted.

But there is a third point:

III. POWER (2 Pet. 1:3).

When the Lord undertook to save you and me, and everyone else who has ever been saved, He exercised "divine power." Human power, human philosophy, human determination, will not do it. Salvation, from beginning to end, is only possible by "divine power." It took "divine power" to bring us to Christ, and it takes "divine power" to make us what the Lord intends for us to be. And when we think of the purpose of salvation we are concerned with "life and godliness," "glory and virtue."

But notice carefully what Peter said. We do not have to look elsewhere for this power to be what the Lord wants us to be. We already have it as a part of our salvation, but we learn about "life and godliness" as we become better acquainted Him who has "called us to glory and virtue." This is the same way that we have "grace" and "peace" according to verse 2--

"through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Who has called us? Normally we would say that God has. But we can also say that the Father and the Son are united in calling us to salvation, calling us to Themselves. You would never have come, nor would I, if "divine power" had not been exercised. Cf. what Paul wrote in Rom. 1:16.

So don't go looking for some second blessing in order to pursue godliness. Learn of Christ. Learn of God. And you will find all of the resources there to make you what the Lord wants you to be.

But let us go on to verse 4 where Peter spoke of:

IV. PROMISES (2 Pet. 1:4).

If you want to be holy, if you want to become what God saved you to become, you cannot ignore the promises of God. Where are those promises? They are in the Word of God, scattered all through the Scriptures.

What is a promise, the promise of God?

It is a declaration from God that He will do something for you and me. We are to believe promises. We do not obey them. We obey commandments, but we believe promises. This means that we are going to trust God, and trust Christ, to do what they have promised to do, and it is in trusting the promises that somehow you and I are made "partakers of the divine nature." And yet believing, and waiting, are among the most difficult things that we do. This is where we fall back upon verse 3 and realize that we need "divine power" to believe those "exceeding great and precious promises" that God has given to us. It is our nature to become by doing; it is God's way for us to become by believing!

They are "great" because they are God's promises, and because of what they say. They are "precious" because of their value and because they cannot be found any place else. Something that is rare is of more value than something that is common. God's promises are rare! You will only find them in the Word. A Christian is called a believer because he believed in order to be saved, and he keeps on believing in order to be sanctified.

But is there nothing to do? Yes, there is something to do. But remember that we do what we do believing the promises of God and trusting in the power of God to do what God tells us to do.

I just will mention the last point because I want to begin

here next Sunday night, the Lord willing. Starting with verse 5 we are concerned with:

V. PRACTICE (2 Pet. 1:5).

We need to be adding to our faith. And this adding is not just once for all, nor occasionally, but this is to be a way of life with us. We are to be adding to our faith all of the time.

And Peter told us what to add. See the list.

But remember that to do this we do not go outside of Christ, nor outside of the Word of God. We do not seek something that we do not already have in our Lord Jesus Christ. The adding is done as we learn more about the Lord, as we appropriate what we find in Him by faith, and as we believe the "great and precious promises" of the Word.

This calls for obedience. It calls for diligent obedience. The way is not easy, but the way is certain, and the results are beyond our greatest expectation.

Concl: If you and I have been living like this during 1990, then we are not going to be like we were in 1989. It is possible for believers to stand still. But the Lord will bring pressures to bear upon us to get us moving along. Let us pray that, as we consider this great chapter of Scripture, one of the greatest, that the Lord will show us more clearly what we need to do, and then will enable us to do it.

One of the greatest discouragements that a pastor has is to see his people staying in the same place year after year. And it is discouraging to any people if they cannot see some growth in their pastor and their other leaders. We all need to learn the grace of spiritual addition. That is where the blessing is. And this is where how we can best bring glory to our great God and our Savior.

ADD TO YOUR FAITH
2 Peter 1:5-7

Intro: Last week we began a study of 2 Peter 1. I have been drawn to this chapter by what Peter said about "these things," an expression which he used no less than five times in this chapter. Cf. vv. 8, 9, 10, 12, 15. It is apparent that he was referring to the seven things mentioned in verses 5 through 7. Faith is the foundation; the seven things are to be added to faith by which faith is developed and strengthened. They have been called, "The Christian's Graces" (Simeon, Charles, Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible, Vol. 20, pp. 294-301). There is a sense in which they give us a definition of faith. Therefore, adding to faith is not bringing in other things, but multiplying the characteristics of the faith which we already have.

Peter was writing to those who had "obtained" faith. They were people who had been made "partakers of the divine nature." Therefore, he was writing to believers. But believers need to grow, to move on, to increase their faith. Here Peter was explaining how that is done.

The order of the list is significant.

We would have to say that the list is complete. Peter did not leave anything out that should be here. And this is emphasized by what he wrote in verses 8-11. "These things," no more and no less, were the things that Peter had spoken to them about before. He would be talking about them as long as he lived. And he wrote so they would have a permanent record after he was gone of the "things" which he held to be supremely important.

Let me list them for you again:

- 1) "Virtue."
- 2) "Knowledge."
- 3) "Temperance."
- 4) "Patience."
- 5) "Godliness."
- 6) "Brotherly kindness."
- 7) "Charity," or love.

The NKJV lists them this way:

- 1) "Virtue."
- 2) "Knowledge."
- 3) "Self-control."
- 4) "Perseverance."
- 5) "Godliness."
- 6) "Brotherly kindness."
- 7) "Love."

The NIV calls "virtue," goodness, otherwise the list is the same as the NKJV. The NASB calls "virtue," moral excellence. Otherwise it is the same as the NKJV.

So it would seem that the only real difference among the translators of these four versions has to do with the first one, called "virtue" in the KJV and the NKJV.

Remember that this is a complete list. Remember also that the order is significant; it must not be altered. Continual attention to all seven of these qualities, or graces, or, as Peter spoke of them, "these things," is all that it takes to have a strong faith, a consistent life, and positive assurance that one is truly a child of God. It is easy to see why Peter was so enthusiastic about them.

Tonight let us begin by taking up the first of "these things":

I. "VIRTUE" (2 Pet. 1:5a).

When we speak of "virtue" in every-day language, we usually have in mind moral excellence, or chastity. The world has actually forsaken any standard of morality. Things are acceptable now that were not acceptable just a few years ago. It is acceptable now in society for a man and a woman to live together without being married. It is acceptable now in society for a person to be a homosexual. Even infidelity between husbands and wives is behavior that is expected in some circles. So there is no clear-cut definition of what is moral or immoral except among those who believe that the Bible sets the standard for us.

Therefore, going back to the older definition of "virtue," there is no question but that a child of God will adhere to the highest standards of morality which are taught in both the Old and New Testaments.

However, this will come later in the list.

My dictionary tells me that there is an old definition of "virtue" which is now obsolete. It defined "virtue" as manly courage. My Greek lexicon calls it moral vigor. We would think of this as moral strength.

Our faith as Christians needs to be strengthened with manly, or womanly, courage. The word suggests that it is not going to be easy to walk with the Lord in a world like this.

~ Temptations will come along. There are going to be trials of various kinds. We have a natural fear of speaking for the Lord, and of standing for what pleases God when we are with people who do not know the Lord, even with Christians who are

weak in their faith. We need to be courageous. We need to be able to stand when others around us are falling. We need to stand when no one else is standing. This is the meaning of the word, "virtue."

- One of the best illustration that we have of "virtue" in the Scriptures is to be found in our Lord's words to Joshua as he assumed the leadership of the nation Israel. In fact, we have it in our SS lesson for next Sunday. One of the questions in the lesson on Deuteronomy 31 is, "What did Moses tell Joshua?" The answer is in verses 7 and 8. You can also find them in Joshua, chapter 1. Let me read them for you from Deuteronomy 31. (Read.)

Joshua was going to need strength to be a good leader, much strength, spiritual strength. He was going to need courage. Courage is the confidence, the resolve, the bravery to face danger and trouble without going to pieces, nor getting panicky.

We are all cowards at heart. Even we men are, ladies. None of us likes to face a tough or dangerous situation. Soldiers going into battle are afraid. When we face new situations, we are inclined to be fearful. It is only by a strong faith that we can be made truly strong!x

- What reasons did the Lord give Joshua for being strong, being courageous, for, in the old sense of the word, being virtuous? Look at Deut. 31:8.

There are four promises that the Lord gave to Joshua in this verse:

- 1) "And the Lord, he ~~is~~ ^{is} that doth go before thee."
- 2) "He will be with thee."
- 3) "He will not fail thee."
- 4) "Nor forsake thee."

What do we do with a promises? We either believe it, or we do not believe it. Believing a promise means that our faith is being exercised. And we need always to remember what Paul wrote in Rom. 10:17,

So then faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God.

- The Lord did not just tell Moses to tell Joshua that he needed to be courageous, but He gave Moses four promises to give to Joshua. Joshua's faith would be strengthened, he would become a man of courage and spiritual strength, IF he took God at His word, and believed the promise.

Joshua was a soldier. We are soldiers, too. Joshua needed

courage. We need courage, too. Paul wrote to Timothy,
Thou therefore, my son,
be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...
Thou therefore endure hardness
as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:1, 3).

If we are going to be strong, we must believe the promises of God. If we are to believe the promises, we must know what they are. Therefore, in order to add "virtue" to our "faith" we need to read our Bibles. We need to read them carefully and thoughtfully and prayerfully. We need to meditate upon what God has promised to do for us. We are not strong because we can do things for ourselves, but we are strong when we are trusting God to strengthen us.

We need to be like Abraham. He had his failings, like we do. But Paul said a very wonderful thing about Abraham in Romans 4:20, 21:

He staggered not at the promise of God
through unbelief;
but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
And being fully persuaded that,
what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Think also of those last words of Isa. 40, verses 28-31.
(Read.)

I have already mentioned prayer, but let me stress the importance of prayer, much prayer. We cannot wait on the Lord without being in prayer. The promise of Psa. 27:14 is,
Wait on the Lord: be of good courage,
and he shall strengthen thine heart:
wait, I say, on the Lord.

Concl: This is as far as we will go tonight. There is much here for us to work on, isn't there?

And now that you know what "virtue" is, look for it in the lives of the people whose story is told in the Bible. It was "virtue" that made David face Goliath, and kill him. It was "virtue" that kept Daniel praying although he knew he would be cast into a den of lions. It was "virtue" that made John the Baptist stand against the evils of his day. The history of the church is full of the records of men and women of God who had the courage from the Lord to face what they never could have faced alone.

What is the opposite of "virtue"? Cowardice and, if possible, compromise. May the Lord cause us to feed upon His promises so that, come what may, we will have the courage and strength to believe His promises regardless of how strong the

opposition may be, or how dire the consequences!

"Add to your faith virtue." Yes, "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." Peter mentioned the promises of God in verse 4. Through these we are made "partakers of the divine nature." And it goes without saying (although it needs to be said), that the most virtuous Man Who ever lived was our Lord Jesus Christ. Without "virtue" the Lord could never have faced the Cross. He, too, in His humanity, was relying wholly upon the promises of the Father.

We will experience failures in seeking to be courageous. We may be courageous in some things, cowardly in others. But we must continually be adding to our faith this divine characteristic if we are to stand for the Lord in this evil world.

ADDING KNOWLEDGE

2 Peter 1:5, 6

Intro: We start out with "faith." This marks the beginning of our existence and experience as the children of God. But our faith is not to remain what it was when we were first saved; our faith needs to grow, to be strengthened. It is strengthened by the addition of certain things, which Peter called, "these things."

The first is "virtue."

We learned that this is spiritual strength, or courage. It is that element of faith which enables a person to stand alone, if necessary. "Virtue" keeps our faith in place even when circumstances and people are against us. Abraham and Joshua and Daniel are all examples of "virtue" in Scripture, but by no means the only examples. We are strong when we rely upon the Lord, knowing that He will be with us, that He will not leave us, nor fail us!

To faith with virtue we are to add "knowledge." This is what we want to consider tonight. It is the familiar Greek word, γνῶσις. This is a word which expresses a personal acquaintance with the truth. And just as we saw a couple of weeks ago that a Christian can never be as strong as he needs to be, nor as strong as he can be, but needs to be continually growing in strength and courage, the same is true of knowledge. We never know all that we ought to know, or need to know. We never know anything as well as we can know it, and need to know it. I am speaking of the knowledge of the truth. So we must add, and add, and keep on adding knowledge to our faith.

This is not the first time that Peter mentioned "knowledge" in this epistle. Cf. vv. 2, 3. And then see v. 8, and read on down through v. 15. He did not always use the same word for knowledge, but the emphasis is there nevertheless. Peter would define a Christian as a person who knows, and knows that he knows, and who is constantly growing in his knowledge. And since added "grace" comes through knowledge, and "grace" is strength, growing in knowledge even adds to our virtue. An ignorant Christian is a contradiction. But I don't think that this is generally understood in the church today. If people are looking for knowledge, they are not looking for the right kind of knowledge.

Just this past week I met a lady who used to be in a church where I was the pastor. They only came on Sunday mornings, but they were very regular until he died. Then I don't remember that I ever saw her again until this week. I am

— talking about at least fifteen years ago. In talking to her I asked her where she was going to church. She replied that she listened to Christian broadcasts and telecasts, but was not attending any church. And then she went on to say, "But I send in my offering even though I don't go, so I guess I am doing my part to help."

Her attitude showed that she did not understand the main purpose of the church. It is not to get people to give their money so that the work can continue. We are thankful when people do give, i.e., the Lord's people, but it is tragic if we have given people the idea that the main reason for going to church is to support the church financially.

We need to let people know that they come to church, first of all, to receive, not to give. And what they need to receive is knowledge, the knowledge of the truth. This means that people should go to church to be taught, and that is the kind of a church they should be looking for.

— The leaders of the church must be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24). This means they must be capable of teaching and ready to teach. And it should go without saying (although it always needs to be said) that what must be taught is the Bible. Never forget what Peter wrote in 2 Pet. 1:12-15. There are many things being taught in churches today which do not have any basis in Scripture. And it is because people do not know their Bibles that teachers can get by teaching some of the things which they teach. It is the Bible that we need to know.

But now we need to ask,

I. HOW DO WE ADD TO THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE?

From Peter's first epistle we can answer,

A. By reading the Bible.

The Bible needs to be read thoroughly. Every part is important, or it would not be there.

It is good to have a schedule to read by. And it is good to have a certain time in the day that we give to personal Bible reading and prayer.

— As a minimum every Christian should seek to read the Bible through at least once a year. Perhaps children who are just getting started reading should read less, but we ought to get our children headed in the direction of going through the Bible at least once a year.

We need to incorporate into our reading both prayer and meditation. In prayer we are seeking the help of the Lord to understand what we are reading, and in meditation we are making sure that we are comprehending the truth--not just rushing through it to get to something else.

I do not care what other things a person may do to add knowledge to his faith, if he is not reading the Bible for himself, there will be a loss which nothing can make up.

B. Read good Christian books.

This is far down on the list after reading the Bible, but it should be on every Christian's list.

Read books written by men or women who can help you to a greater understanding of the Word of God. Do not just read for enjoyment, but read for profit--and you will soon find that will give you the greatest pleasure. A little experience will help you to know who the good writers are. And don't be afraid of the older writers. You will probably get so that you like them the best.

And here is something that you will realize, too. The more you are reading the Word, and understanding the Word, the better qualified you will be to discern what is good and what is not good, what is Scriptural, and what is not Scriptural. I would say that most people are reading books today which are so light that they will never help anyone to really grow in the Lord.

C. Go regularly to a Bible teaching church.

Every service at church should be designed either to remind people of some truth that they already know, or to teach them something from the Scriptures which they have not known.

And our churches should help our people with all of their Bible, not just certain parts of it, nor just about certain doctrines in the Bible.

Let me add one more thing about how we add to the knowledge that we already have.

D. Engage in conversation with others about the Bible.

As we try to express to others what we believe, our own understanding of the truth will grow. This is a great need among believers. We can get up from a service, and immediately talk about things that have nothing to do with what we have just heard. Or we may meet together with other

Christians and talk about any and everything but the Word. Centering our conversation on the Word of God will be most helpful in adding to our knowledge of Scripture.

I hope that these suggestions will help you to give diligence to add to your faith...knowledge. You and I should be learning more about our Bibles to our dying day.

But let me take just a few minutes to talk about:

II. WHAT SHOULD WE SEEK TO KNOW?

The Bible is a big book. It deals with many subjects. What should be my objectives as to what I need to know?

A. The Holy Spirit.

Let me say that the Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide us into the truth. He is the Author of Scripture, and He is the greatest Teacher of Scripture. And He does not have a set curriculum like you would have in some school. He is your own personal Instructor. He knows your needs. He knows your problems. And you will find that it is often amazing to see how your systematic reading of the Scriptures brings you to the very passage that you need on the very day that you need it! So learn to trust the Holy Spirit. Depend upon Him to show you each day from the Word what He wants to teach you.

B. God and Christ.

Read again verses 2 and 3 of this chapter. Read also 2 Pet. 3:18. Learn early, and always remember, that the truth of the Word of God is never separated from either God or Christ. The object of our knowledge is to help us to know God and Christ better than we do. The great doctrines of Scripture should never be considered apart from the Members of the Godhead. It is when we see God in His Word--God, the Father; God, the Son; God, the Holy Spirit--that the truth comes to life. Look for the attributes of God. Look to see what God has done in the past. Look at His promises. Study the future in Scripture. But always look at the truth in the light of what God is--all three Persons of the Godhead.

It is in seeing God in His Word that our faith is strengthened, and that we will be learning things that will bring blessing to our souls.

C. Personal obedience.

If we are doing all of the above faithfully, it is doubtful

if anyone will have to tell us that the Bible is not only to be understood, but it is to be obeyed!

- You will find that as you are learning about God in His Word, and as you are learning the truths of Scripture, you will be learning also about yourself, your needs, ways in which you have been displeasing God, and how you can please Him. This is where the battle rages, but this is where the victories are won.

Growing in grace can only take place through our personal acquaintance with the Word of God. Growing in grace means that, as we learn about Christ, the Holy Spirit will bring about those changes in our lives which are needed to make us like Christ.

Concl: Now the question is, What are you and I going to do about adding knowing to our virtue and to our faith? And when are we going to start?

- Many of you, I hope all of you, are reading your Bibles regularly now. But it will do all of us good to consider if this is still a blessing to us, and if we are continuing to find it profitable. If not, then you should seek to make the necessary changes. If so, then ask the Lord to make your addition of knowledge an even greater blessing to you, and that there will be greater changes in your life as you seek to walk each day with the Lord.

As I close, let me remind you of what Peter said in the beginning of verse 5: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add...knowledge." Don't be spasmodic about your knowledge of the Word. Be faithful. The fruit of such faithfulness is greater than any of us can possibly realize.

ADDING SELF-CONTROL
2 Peter 1:6

Perhaps one reason
temperance was used
instead of self-control
was to avoid the idea
that
it is
"to keep
something"

Intro: Peter began with "faith." To "faith" must be added
"virtue," to "virtue knowledge," and now to
"knowledge temperance."

The word itself means having power over something, or with respect to something. It means to master, to control, to curb or restrain.

The word is used in Acts 24:25; Gal. 5:23; and here. The adjective is used in Tit.1:8 where it is said that a bishop, or elder, should be "temperate."

INTEMPERANCE IS APPARENT EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD - IN BUSINESS IN POLITICS IN PLEASURE DRINKING

The verb is used in 1 Cor. 7:9 and 9:25. The first of these has to do with curbing sexual desire; the second has to do with the training an athlete goes through to win a race.

We hear very little about self-control these days, even among the people of God. This introduces a negative note in the words that the Apostle Peter was emphasizing with the Jews who had been scattered because of their faith. It indicates that if we are to make progress spiritually, there are certain things which we cannot do.

DRUGS, SEX, IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS SADDAM HUSSEIN

We need to remember that these words have to be considered in the light of what Peter said in verse 10 about making our calling and election sure. And he used the word "diligence" there as he did in verse 5.

The question, then, is this: Does self-control by itself indicate that a person is a Christian?

The answer is, NO! We all know people who are very disciplined, who exercise a great deal of self-control, who are not Christians, and make no pretense of being a Christian. They may not drink because they know it is not good for their health, for their family, for their profession, for their personal respectability. They may refrain from illicit sex for the same reasons. They may be honest for the same reasons. Self-control alone does not prove that a person is a Christian.

How are we to define this, then?

Well, we need to see that self-control is mentioned here as the third thing that is to be added to faith. Faith is the foundation, then we add virtue, knowledge, and then self-control. True self-control cannot exist without faith and virtue and knowledge. The Christian has a special reason for

exercising self-control which does not enter into the thinking of a non-Christian at all. On the other hand we can know that a person who is habitually intemperate, lacking all self-control, cannot possibly be a child of God.

Our faith causes us to look at the world, at the things of the world, at sin, at pleasure, at money, at position and fame, and many other things in a way that is completely different from the person without Christ. It is necessary for us to have the things that we require to live, but we look at them in a different way.

John Brown, a Scottish preacher who ministered for many years early in the 19th century in Edinburgh, has an excellent statement about this. (Read pp. 81, 82.)

I. THE PASSAGES.

A. ACTS 24:25

B. GAL. 5:23 - ^{THE SPIRIT DOES, BUT NOT INDEPENDENTLY OF US. WE MORTIFY, WE RESIST, WE REFUSE TO} SO THIS IS NOT A HUMAN TRAIT

BUT A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT; NOT OF MAN, BUT OF GOD - ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS TO BE LIKE THE HUMAN TRAIT INTemperance COMES FROM THE FLESH, AND THE WORLD, ENGINEERED BY SATAN.

C. TIT. 1:8 - A REQUIREMENT FOR CHURCH LEADERS.

D. THE ILLUSTRATION: 1 COR. 9:24-27, esp. v. 25.

II. EXAMPLES IN SCRIPTURE:

A. ABRAHAM WITH LOT IN GEN. 13.

B. MOSES - HEB. 11:24-27.

C. PAUL HIMSELF - PHIL. 3.

Concl: Tit. 2:11-14.

v. 12 IS SELF-CONTROL

ADDING PATIENCE

2 Peter 1:6

Intro: Patience is undoubtedly one of the most important of all words in the Bible for the child of God. The benefits of patience can be seen in the OT as well as in the NT. There are many examples of it in the OT, and it occupies a major place in the teaching of the NT. And so it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit would lead the Apostle Peter to include it in this list of spiritual qualities, or characteristics, or graces. In none of these instances was Peter speaking of a human trait. These are all to be sought by each of us, the children of God. We seek them. We add them to our faith. But they are really produced by the Spirit of God working in us and through us. We need to recognize that these are what we need, and then set out to make them a part of ourselves. When Peter spoke of patience he did not just have in mind that we ought to show patience when we need to, but he meant that we should be patient people, that patience would become a part of our character.

None of us is naturally patient. You can see abundant evidence of impatience if you look at children, even babies. So it needs to be added to us by the grace of God, and it will require all of the diligence that we can find. And let us remember that diligence (see vv. 5, 10) means that we never quit, we never give up. It means that whatever it takes to make us patient people, we are going to persevere. We will fail, and sometimes fail miserably, but we come right back determined to win the battle against impatience. Impatient is what we are by nature; patient is what we need to become by grace. That is where we need the Lord's help, and we need it constantly.

Last year our Bible Memory assignment for many of us was Paul's Epistle to the Colossians. One of the verses in Paul's prayer found in chapter 1 was this: verse 11:

Strengthened with all might,
according to his glorious power,
unto **all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.**

Paul teaches us that we need to pray for patience, that God gives it, but it requires that we be strengthened if we are to become patient people. A weak Christian will always be an impatient Christian. A weak Christian will sometimes be patient because he can't do anything else, but he is not very joyful about it. The patience which God gives, and which we need, is patience coupled with joy.

But let us define patience so we will all know what we are talking about. There is more to the Greek word than we normally think when we speak of patience in English--although

I was interested to see that my English dictionary includes all of the ideas that are included in the Greek.

I. THE MEANING OF "PATIENCE."

- It is not a passive word by any means. It does not mean that we wait because we cannot do anything else. It means that we are not hasty, i.e., we do not rush ahead to do something just because something needs to be done. Solomon said,

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding:
but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly
(Prov. 14:29).

He also said,

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words?
there is more hope of a fool than of him
(Prov. 29:20).

There is always more possibility of doing the wrong thing than when we are patient and make sure that we are doing what we ought to do. A patient person is wary of snap judgments.

A patient person does not fail to act when he needs to act, but he is not afraid to wait until he knows the right thing to do.

- The Greek word means to remain under. It speaks of a person under a burden of some kind. It may be only the need to make a decision, or it may be a great trial of some kind. If it is a responsibility he has, he does not try to shirk it, but he stays under it until he can act, and until he knows what to do.

So being patient meaning waiting.

But to be patient also means that we persevere.

I was disappointed to see that the NASB, the NIV, and the NASB all use the word "perseverance" in this verse, even though that is included in the meaning of the word. A patient person will persevere, but a persevering person will not necessarily be patient. A persevering person will be inclined to act when he ought to be waiting. But waiting does not mean that we are to do nothing. We remain steadfast to our calling. We do not shirk our responsibilities. We persevere in doing what we can do, waiting on the Lord to work for us, or to open the door for us to do what He wants us to do.

- Abram persevered and went down into Egypt when he found that there was a famine in Canaan, but he was not patient. Daniel was patient when he persevered in praying even though he knew that it might mean the lions' den for him. We never quit.

Life never comes to a complete standstill. We go on living, but a patient person, while he perseveres in some things, perhaps in most things, yet he refuses to move ahead of the Lord until he gets a green light, or until the Lord does for him what needs to be done.

Now let me say a few words about:

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF PATIENCE.

For this I am going to ask you to turn to James 1, verses 2-4.

We do not always immediately know that purpose of a particular trial, but one thing we can be sure of: One of God's main purposes in every trial is to teach us patience. And for this reason, as James said, we can "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations," or testings. The trial of our faith produces patience. A trial is usually a trial because it is too much for us. Our hands are tied in one way or another. But God has designed it that way.

However, if we are patient, waiting on the Lord, continuing to do what we can do, we will find that this brings us to greater maturity in Christ. Mature Christians are always patient Christians. Impatience in a Christian identifies that Christian as immature, needing greatly to grow up in the Lord.

Notice also what James wrote in verse 12 of this same 5th chapter of James.

It would be hard to state the importance of adding patience to ourselves any stronger than James has done.

Paul said the same in Romans 5:3, 4:

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:
knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
And patience experience....

"Experience" is the translated of a Greek word which means the state of being approved, or that patience produces the kind of character which pleases God, character which has His approval.

Paul's exhortation to the Romans in Rom. 12:12 is, "Patient in tribulation."

That is why our trials can prove to be a great blessing for us. We want the Lord to do something for us; He is primarily concerned about doing something to us, and in us. Romans 8:28 is a great encouragement for us to be patient.

There are many, many more things that could be said about patience, but let me add just one more. It is this:

III. PATIENCE AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

- There is an important verse in 2 Thess. 3:5 which I think that the translators of the King James have mistranslated. (Read.)

I am sure that they have translated it this way because both 1 and 2 Thessalonians deal with the coming of the Lord. But the Greek text says this (it is a prayer):

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,
and into the patience of Christ.

The reason that it is important for us to be patient is because our Lord was patient, and we are predestined to be like He is. This is what we need to dwell on in these last days: the love of God, and the patience of Christ.

Where do we see the patience of Christ?

Obviously it has something to do with His life on earth. Our answer can be found several places, but let me call your attention to Heb. 12:1-4.

- Notice the word "endured." This is the verb from which our word patience is formed. One who has patience endures. He lasts. He sticks. He is not turned aside by opposition, nor by the difficulties which stand in his way as a Christian. He patiently endures; he perseveres trusting God.

So that from this passage of Scripture we need to learn that, if we are to learn patience, and add patience to our own character, we need to spend much time looking at Christ as He is portrayed in the Word, and looking especially at the Cross.

Isaiah 53 is a commentary, among other things, on the patience of Christ. One of the perfections of our Lord is His patience--one of the grandest of all of His attributes. And we are to be like He is.

- Concl: I hope that, as we go through these spiritual characteristics, we are not just learning about them, but that we are trusting the Lord to show us how to add each one, and that we are diligently working at it. Not only is there great blessing in this, but as we add we will find ourselves becoming more and more like our Lord.

ADDING GODLINESS

2 Peter 1:6

Intro: We come tonight to consider the fifth of the Christian graces which Peter mentioned in 2 Peter 1:5-7. The first four are:

- 1) Virtue.
- 2) Knowledge.
- 3) Self-control.
- 4) Patience.

The fifth is:

- 5) Godliness.

The last two are:

- 6) Brotherly kindness.
- 7) Love.

Let us review for just a moment what we have learned about those first four.

"Virtue" is courage, or strength. The person who is going to live for the Lord, who is going to walk by faith, really trusting the Lord, is going to have to have inner strength in order to do it. There are discouragements in the way. There are temptations to overcome. There is a very real Enemy that we have to face. There is a sinful world in which we live. And there are both corruptions and weaknesses within that will draw us down and out if our faith is not strengthened for the battles and trials ahead.

"Knowledge" includes both the knowledge of the truth, and the ability to use the truth wisely in daily living. Our faith is ministered to us through the Word; it must also be sustained and strengthened by the Word. We never know all that we can know, and should know. But we are to be adding continually to that knowledge so that we will be, and our lives will be, what they ought to be in the sight of God. We do not seek to acquire knowledge just for the sake of having more knowledge, but we learn in order to live, to live so as to please God.

"Temperance," or self-control, is self-mastery, or self-restraint. I hope you remember that the illustration which the Apostle Paul gave us of self-control is that of the athlete in training, mentioned in 1 Cor. 9:24-27. The same kind of an illustration is given in a soldier preparing for war. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:3, 4):

Thou therefore endure hardness,
as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.
No man that warreth entangleth himself
with the affairs of this life;
that he may please him

who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

This would mean that the Christian life and warfare not only has its positive side, but its negative side. There are things that the child of God must resist, must avoid, must not do, if he is to please God and have the blessing of God upon His life. Separation from sin and separation from the world is still a part of what it means to be and act like a Christian. This emphasis is sadly lacking among Christians today. We need to be careful about our leisure time. We need to read with care and caution. TV is a place where your self-control will be tested, and the best answer to it is the off switch.

"Patience," I hope you will remember, has two aspects. One is that we are to remain under our burdens and trials as long as the Lord wants us to be there, at the same time persevering in whatever our responsibilities may be. We do not like to wait for God or anyone else. We get very impatient when things do not move rapidly ahead. But, as James (1:2-4) tells us, a work of God can be accomplished in our lives through patience which cannot be done in any other way. We all should know that the Scriptures link together faith and patience.

Tonight we come to "godliness."

"Godliness" brings us to a truth which we here at Trinity Bible Church hold as being very precious: the sovereignty of God! But the emphasis is practical. There are many people who claim to believe in the sovereignty of God who do not live like they believe in it.

Let us trace back through our words with this idea in mind.

Remembering that the basic characteristic of a child of God is faith, faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith in the Holy Spirit, faith in the Word of God. No person can be a Christian without faith.

But where does faith come from? It is a gift from God. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9. It comes to us through the Word of God. Cf. Rom. 10:17. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Cf. Heb. 12:2. Faith comes to us from Christ through the Word as a gift of a Sovereign God! Our salvation is traceable to God, not in any way to ourselves. If God had not sought us, and given us faith, we would never have come to Him, and we could never have believed. The Lord's people who do not understand this are bound for many difficulties in their walk with the Lord. It is a great day in any person's life when He sees and believes that God is sovereign!

But now the first thing we add to our faith is "virtue," strength, courage. Where do we get this? We learned that Paul prayed that the Colossians would be strengthened. Paul told the Philippians, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Cf. also Isa. 40:31. God is the One Who gives us strength, and He measures it out to us according to His own sovereign will.

What about "knowledge"?

Do you decide what you want to learn about God, what you want to learn from the Word, or do you ask the Lord to teach you? Who decides what we are to be taught? Do we, or does the Lord?

We would all have to say that the Lord teaches us what He wants us to know. He may put us through circumstances to make us realize what we need, but it is still the work of a sovereign God bringing us to ask for what He wants to teach us. The Lord supervises our learning. Knowledge comes from Him, both doctrinal and practical.

What about "self-control"?

Although we speak of self-control, do we control ourselves, our desires, our thoughts, our words, our actions, by ourselves, without the help of the Lord. NO! We all would admit if we know the truth that we can only control ourselves if God enables us to do so. Paul wrote, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Then it follows that if we do not walk in dependence upon the Spirit, we will fulfill the lusts of the flesh. We cannot be victorious over our sins without the help of the sovereign Holy Spirit. Self-discipline is the result of Phil. 2:13.

And then "patience."

In the prayer of Paul for the Colossians in which he was asking the Lord to strengthen them, what was the strength to be used for? "All patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Col. 1:11). So our ability to stay under a burden, and to continue on with whatever we have to do, is an ability that God gives to us. And so we see evidence of a sovereign God again.

Step by step through this list we find ourselves cast upon our God, our sovereign God, looking to Him to make us what He wants us to be.

So what about "godliness"? What is "godliness"? This is where, as Dr. McGee used to say, "the rubber meets the road."

This is where a belief in the sovereignty of God becomes a practical reality in our lives.

I. THE MEANING OF "GODLINESS."

— A godly person is a God-centered person. He is a person who believes that God is really God. If God is not sovereign, then God is not God. By definition God must be sovereign. There can be none greater than He is, and all things must be subject to Him and dependent upon Him.

So the purpose of adding virtue and knowledge and self-control and patience is to bring us to the place where our lives will find their center in GOD! We do not get there overnight. We do not even get there in a lifetime. But, by the grace of God, we need to keep moving in that direction, adding to our faith and virtue and knowledge and self-control and patience, godliness.

— A godly person is primarily concerned about pleasing God. He wants his behavior to be acceptable to God. More than that, he wants the thoughts of his heart to have divine approval. He wants to give God the pre-eminent place in his life. He wants to honor and glorify God. He wants to give God all of the worship, praise, and thanksgiving which rightfully belongs to Him. The godly person never considers any situation apart from God and the purpose that God has in it. A godly person counts on God, prays to God, waits for Him, and keeps on trusting Him. A godly person refuses to take credit for any good thing that he does, and he is quick to recognize the goodness of God in every blessing that comes his way.

This is what God wants every one of us to be: GODLY!

This is a big order, isn't it?

This is the way Charles Simeon expressed it:

We must see the hand of God in every thing; and receive every thing as from him; and do every thing as for him; making his will the rule, and his glory the end, of all our actions. At the same time, we must walk with him, and delight ourselves in him, and maintain sweet fellowship with him as our Father and our Friend, and must look for his approbation as our great reward (Vol. 20, p. 296).

— How can such a life be ours? This surely is a foretaste of heaven upon earth.

II. THE WAY TO GODLINESS.

It would contradict everything that I have been saying to

suggest that you can I could accomplish something like this on our own, that this is something we can do for ourselves so as to make ourselves acceptable to God in this way.

So let me make this as the first point, and this is one reason we are here tonight:

- A. We need to realize that this is what God wants from us.

As difficult as it is, we can clearly see from the Word of God that God wants us to be godly.

But secondly,

- B. We need to realize that we cannot make ourselves godly.

Just because we are told in the Word of God to do something, or to be something, does not mean that we are able to do it, or to be what He wants us to be. We are responsible to obey, but we will only fail if we think that we can be godly without help, divine help.

- C. We need to know that we already have everything that it takes to become godly people.

I am not contradicting what I have just said. We do have what it takes, but it is not in ourselves. It is in Christ! Note what Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:3.

We have "all things that pertain unto life and **godliness.**" Where? "Through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

Who called us? God did. Then, if we are to be godly people, we must avail ourselves of the knowledge that has been given to us of God.

Where do we find that? This leads me to my next point.

- D. We need to learn all that we can about God as He is revealed in the Word, and as He is revealed in Christ.

Our Bibles tell us how we can be godly. Not only that, but since this Word is a living Word, I can tell you that the Bible, the truth of the Bible, gives us the power to be godly people. We come to the Word to learn of God, to learn of Christ, to learn of the Holy Spirit. We see what They are, and we see what They want us to be, and how they enable us to

be what they want us to be. The more we learn, the clearer the picture becomes, and the more we realize what we are to do and be if we are to become godly.

And as we learn about God, we see also that:

E. We need to seek the blessing of the Lord in prayer.

You will always find that a godly person is a praying person, not praying just at certain times, but a person who lives a life on continual prayer.

Much, much more could be said, but let me conclude with one more point, and then one verse of Scripture.

F. We need to learn to see the hand of the Lord in all that happens to us.

We want to be godly, but infinitely more does God want us to be godly. This is the reason that He has saved us. So, since He is God, our sovereign God, we can be sure that all that He does with us--trials, testings, disappointments, failures, successes, outstanding blessings--are all designed to make us godly. Romans 8:28 assures us of this.

Concl: I close with what David, a very godly man, said in Psa. 16:8. This would be a good verse for you to memorize, and then to ask the Lord to make it just as real to you as it was to David.

May God enable us to add "godliness" to our faith.

ADDING BROTHERLY KINDNESS

2 Peter 1:7

Intro: I want you to notice tonight, as we consider "brotherly kindness," the progression that is evident in these grace which we have been considering.

- 1) The first five have to do with each of us for ourselves: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience.
- 2) The one we have last Sunday night has to do with God: godliness.
- 3) The one we have tonight, and the one we will have next Sunday night, have to do with others: brotherly love, and charity (which is another form of love).

If there is a difference between these last two, we can see that "brotherly love" (which we will call it) has to do with other believers, both men and women, while "love" can be expanded to include people who are not believers. For example, we are commanded to love our enemies.

The best example of the spelling of the Greek word for "brotherly kindness," or "brotherly love," is to be found in the name of the city, Philadelphia. Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love. Cf. Rev. 1:1; 3:7.

The word (which is better translated, brotherly love) is found seven times in the NT, twice in one verse (our text):

- 1) Romans 12:10: "Be kindly affectioned one to another **with brotherly love;** in honour preferring one another."
- 2) 1 Thess. 4:9: "But as touching **brotherly love** ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."
- 3) Heb. 13:1: "Let **brotherly love** continue."
- 4) 1 Pet. 1:22: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned **love of the brethren**, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."
- 5) 1 Pet. 3:8: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, **love as brethren**, be courteous." (The ending on this word for "love as brethren" is -os, rather than -ia in the others. But the meaning is the same.)
- 6) 2 Pet. 1:7: "And to godliness **brotherly kindness**, and to **brotherly kindness**, charity."

The connection between "godliness" and "brotherly kindness" and "love" is similar to that expressed by our Lord in the two commandments of greatest importance. Cf. Matt. 22:34-40.

Now let us examine these words, "brotherly love," to determine if we can what the Apostle Peter had in mind when

he added this to all that had gone on before.

I. AN OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL TRUE BELIEVERS.

A true believer loves God. A true believer loves the people of God. These may not be very prominent at first, but they are there in the heart of even a babe in Christ. We are now speaking about an affection which only a believer can manifest, and he will show it only to others whom he considers to be believers in Christ also.

Since it is "**brotherly** love," it has to do with those who are his brothers and sisters in Christ. A person who does not have this in his heart for the people of God is not a true Christian. A person who likes to be with Christian people, but is just as comfortable and just as happy in the presence of non-Christians, probably is not a Christian at all. A true child of God will something that is very special and very unique in the fellowship of the saints. This is the bond of affection that we as the people of God have for each other.

Peter is not the only one who spoke of this in the NT epistles. Paul spoke of it, and so did John. In fact, John says that this is one of the evidences that a person has really been saved. I am thinking of what he wrote in 1 John 3:14:

We know that we have passed from death unto life,
because we love the brethren.
He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

There is no such thing as being saved without feeling a love for the Lord's people. Before a person is saved, he avoids the Lord's people. After he is saved he cannot get along without their fellowship.

But now let me give you a second point.

II. LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN NEEDS TO BE ENCOURAGED.

All of the verses where this word appears (because it is one word in the Greek) are exhortations for the people of God to love each other. Sometimes things can go on in a church, and this is, for the time, in the heat of some dispute, lost sight of. But this remains as a prime responsibility of every child of God toward every other child of God. But, like so many other things, we must not forget it. This is one thing that will keep us from neglecting or forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Cf. Heb. 10:25. Our churches should be characterized as places where the people of God really love each other.

But let me point out another thing from our text:

III. LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN NEEDS TO INCREASE.

By the grace of God our love for each other needs to grow. Our walk with the Lord has some personal aspects to it, about which we have been learning. We read our Bibles by ourselves. We pray by ourselves. We obey the Lord in our daily lives, seeking to please the Lord. But we are also a part of a great fellowship. And the longer we know the people of God, the greater our love should be. God's people should get dearer to us the longer we know them. And so we are to be adding to the love that we have for the Lord's people. In fact, as Peter said in 1 Pet. 1:22, we are to "love one another with a pure heart fervently." There is not to be anything carnal about this love. This is a love that is holy, a love that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.

One way the Lord increases our love for each other is through the trials that we go through. We pray for each other. We encourage each other. We do what we can for each other. There is nothing on earth comparable to the fellowship and the love that the Lord's people share with each other.

But now we need to ask,

IV. HOW CAN WE ADD "BROTHERLY LOVE" TO THE LOVE THAT WE ALREADY HAVE FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

There are several answers to that question.

- A. This grace is built upon a foundation of other graces.

If we are adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, and patience, and then increasing in godliness, we will as a result have our hearts prepared to love the Lord's people. Trouble among the Lord's people always is an indication of trouble in our own hearts, and trouble even in our relationship with the Lord. The person who in Solomon's words keeps his heart with all diligence is a person who will be prepared to demonstrate his love for the people of God.

- B. We need to be sensitive to the needs of our fellow-believers.

Learn to recognize when a person has a troubled heart, or when a child of God is going through a time of special need. If one member suffers in the body of Christ, we all suffer. We are so united together in Christ that when one hurts,

all hurt. It may not always be possible or even proper to talk to a person about their need when you feel that they have one, but you can always pray. And there is nothing more important that you can do than to pray. It may not seem like much, but in God's sight it is infinitely important because then you are calling upon God to help. If we really love people, we are going to pray for them. We can't pray for every other Christian, but we have a special responsibility toward those in our fellowship. As the Lord brings others to our minds, we can pray for them, too.

- C. We need to consider the spiritual weakness and the blindness spiritual blindness which we all continue to experience.

The Lord remembers our frame, that we are dust. We need to remember that, too. No Christian is perfect yet. Some day we will all be perfect, but that day has not come. When we consider what the Lord's people might be if they were not saved, then we can be thankful that they are what they are. Learn to look at the progress that others have made, and look for the encouraging signs in their lives. We have a tendency to look at each other's faults instead of seeing all of the evidence of the grace of God that can be seen in a believer's life. I am not speaking now of those who profess, but who do not give evidence of salvation; I am talking about those who are really our brothers and sisters in Christ.

- D. We need to walk humbly with each other.

It will help to keep our hearts tender and loving toward others if we continually remember how much needs to be done in our own hearts. One reason for being gracious to others is because we want them to be gracious to us, too. Our Lord stated one of the principles of the Christian life when He said in the Sermon on the Mount. It is found in Matt. 7:12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would
that men should do to you,
do you even so them:
for this is the law and the prophets.

By that last phrase our Lord was stating that this was one of the most important things that you will find anywhere in the OT which has to do with the lives of the Lord's people. Somehow the Lord sees to it that when we are gracious and loving toward our fellow-believers, they will be the same toward us. Acting on this is expressing our faith in the Word of God.

Concl: Much, much more could be said about this, but I hope that enough has been said at least to get us thinking about this vital part of our lives as Christians. We need to

remember that there are always those who find their way into our churches, just as they were to be found in Israel in our Lord's day and throughout the OT, who pretend to possess the life of God, but who do not possess it. You look in vain for the evidences. Peter was not talking about them. He was not speaking, in referring to this grace, about our relationship with the Word. This is a special fellowship of the Lord's family. And it is surely one of the greatest testimonies that we have with the world when they see our kindness, our thoughtfulness, the love that we show to each other and to all others who are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

May the Lord enable us to add "brotherly love" to our "godliness," and to all of the other things that we need constantly in our own lives. Each of us has a responsibility to see that "brotherly love" is not forgotten in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ADDING LOVE

2 Peter 1:7

Intro: In these days there are many who speak of love as though there were nothing else. Love takes precedence over the truth, over the doctrines of Scripture, the Word of God. Love is more important to some than holy living. To some, love among men is so important that love to God and for God is hardly mentioned. And love for Christ is not even in the thoughts of many who talk about, love, love nothing but love.

There is no question but that love is of major importance in the Word of God. But it is also true that love, true love, cannot be understood apart from God, nor apart from His Word. As Dr. McGee used to say, "This is not the sloppy agape that some people call love." This is love which is an attribute of God, and therefore a love which is a part of God's being.

Peter did not put love first, or second, or third; he put it last because it is impossible for us to add love to our faith unless we see the need for all of those other qualities as a foundation.

The Apostle John gave us a couple of statements regarding God and love which we all need to be familiar with. Both statements are found in 1 John 4. The first in verse 8; the second in verse 16. Let me read them for you.

He that loveth not knoweth not God;
for God is love.

...And we have known and believed the love
that God hath to us. God is love,
and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,
and God in him.

"God is love," and no person can know God without manifesting love because "God is love"! When we know God, we dwell in love, and the God of love dwells in us.

Therefore, if we are to "add...to brotherly love, love, this will mean that:

I. ADDING LOVE MEANS ADDING GOD TO OUR LIVES.

We are not just dealing here with an emotion. And it cannot be explained as a human emotion. We are dealing with God! And what we know about the love of God will be manifest through us more and more.

Paul's prayer in Eph. 3 had to be concerned with adding love to faith. He prayed that the Ephesians might be "rooted and

grounded in love" that they might:

...be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

To know the love of Christ is to know the love of God, and to know the love of Christ is to "be filled with all the fulness of God."

Since this is God's love, it is an unchanging love. And it has four dimensions which go beyond anything that we will ever be able to comprehend fully. And yet we need to seek a greater understanding of God's love, its dimensions, and where and how and why it is to be shown to others.

And so, as with all of these graces which Peter mentioned in this passage, we are turned continually to God, made more dependent upon Him, that these graces might be seen more prominently in our lives.

Let me mention a second thing that is important as we think about adding God's love to our faith:

II. IT IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Two passages tell us this very clearly. First, Gal. 5:22 where we read, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love...." Second, Rom. 5:5, "...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."

"Shed abroad" is a perfect passive which indicates, as this verse says, that we do not do it; the Holy Spirit does. But it also means that He did it in the past, but that the results continue right up to the present. The Holy Spirit only does this with believers, but He does it for ALL believers! Showing the love of God requires supernatural power, and that has been given to us, and continues to be given to us, by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Now a third point--a question:

III. HOW CAN WE RECOGNIZE THE LOVE OF GOD?

How can we distinguish between mere human love, as compared with the love of God?

Let us use a very familiar passage of Scripture to help us understand the love of God: John 3:16. There are at least three things which this verse tells us about the love of God.

- A. It is a love that is primarily concerned about giving.

The Father manifested His love to us by giving us His Son. The Son manifested His love for us by giving Himself. the love of God is a giving love. And how wonderful it is to see this in the life of any Christian. Love moves us to pray for people--and they cannot see that. Love causes us to spend time with them. Love makes us examine our own lives to make sure that we do not cause the people we love to stumble because of something in our lives that is not right. Love meant the greatest possible humiliation for our Lord, but that did not deter Him in the least.

We learned this morning from 2 Timothy 3 that man loves himself, and that he is primarily concerned about getting, not giving. The Lord certainly wants our love in return, and this would be the main point in what Peter was saying. But His love for us was not conditioned upon what God would get out of it in the way of worship, and obedience, and trust. The object of His love was to benefit us, and then to bring glory to Himself in so doing.

- B. The love of God is concerned about spiritual benefits for the people of God.

This is the main reason that we have for loving each other in the family of God. It is that we might help each other in our walk with the Lord, helping each other to grow spiritually.

Peter showed this in this epistle. We see his concern for the people of God in chapter 1. His parting word showed what he really desired for them. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:18.

- C. It is a love that is not deserved.

This is where the love of God far transcends human love. We are attracted by certain things that we see in each other. But God's love could not have been conditioned on this because we are totally unlovely to Him! His love is a love of grace. As Paul said in Romans 5, God loved us even though we were sinners, in spite of our weakness, and although we were at enmity with Him.

Love and grace are constant companions in God's dealings with us, and they should be in our relationships with other people.

But there is another point about this "love" that we need to recognize. Even this is evident in John 3:16.

This exhortation to add love follows immediately on Peter's exhortation regarding "brotherly love." "Brotherly love" is the love that believers show toward each other in the family of God. This is one evidence that we are really saved. It would seem to follow, then, that when Peter spoke of "love," he was thinking especially about:

IV. OUR LOVE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN THE FAMILY OF GOD.

When Lucille and I first began our ministry together, we were with a denominational group that had, in many ways, a lot of good characteristics. But in their zeal to see people saved, they made one mistake which has adversely affected their churches and their people throughout the years from that time until this. Apart from the fact that they depended upon public decisions, and accepted them as meaning a person was really saved, their twofold emphasis with new converts was to find some place of service in the church, and to begin winning others to Christ!

I believe that every Christian should be concerned about the salvation of people who are not Christians. In fact, if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, a true Christian will inevitably be concerned for those who are without Christ. BUT--people were sent out to win others who knew very little about the Word of God. In many cases those new converts had not been told anything about their need to grow in the Lord. They did not know about virtue, or knowledge, or self-control, or patience, or godliness! In many instances they did not know what Christian fellowship was. And so, as is too often the case, they would often spread confusion, and, if they were really saved, were left in a state of spiritual infancy--possibly all of their lives.

Peter was indicating here that there are spiritual needs in our lives which must be met if we are:

- 1) To love each other as we should. That is "brotherly love."
- 2) To love sinners, and to seek to win them to Christ.

This does not mean that we have to wait until we have grown up in Christ before we can expect to serve the Lord by giving the Gospel to others, but it does mean that we see the need to be growing while we are seeking to win others.

But let us recognize that Peter in speaking here of agape was showing that a true child of God will always have a burden to see others come to Christ. This will become a part of his prayers, and this will be an ever-present objective in his relationships with people in the world. The person who seeks to be what the Lord wants Him to be is not only showing his love for the Lord, but his love for the people he hopes will

come to the Lord. The most powerful testimony that can be given to the world is the simple, clear statement of the Gospel backed up by a life that shows the reality of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

— Concl: Now that we have seen what needs to be added to our faith, strengthening our faith, can you see also how comprehensive Peter's words are?

Peter was concerned about three areas of a believer's life:
1) The believer's personal life and growth.
2) The believer's corporate life in the church.
3) The believer's testimony in the world.
Five words focus upon the first; one, on the second; one, on the third.

The order is very important. We need to start in our thinking where Peter started, and then progress in the same way that he progressed. If we do, then rich blessings will be ours now, and great rewards will be ours as we enter into heaven.

— When Peter said, "Giving all diligence, add....," he was making a point that I want to emphasize with you as I close tonight. He was stating that each one of us has a personal responsibility to read what he wrote, understand it, and then set out by the grace of God to see that all of these things are added to our faith. I can't do it for you; you can't do it for me. We might think that we can ignore it, and that we will never hear about it again. If that happens to you, I would encourage you to see if you are really saved. Peter said that our very desire for these things makes our calling and election sure, that is, it will be confirmation of the reality of our faith in Christ. If we really know the Lord, the Lord Himself will not let us forget what Peter has written. He will trouble our conscience if we are failing, and he has ways of working through the circumstances of our lives so that we will want to do what the Lord wants us to do, and so we will be what the Lord wants us to be.

If we keep things in God's order, there is sure to be blessing for us, blessing for our fellow-believers, blessing for people who tonight are without Christ, and most importantly, GLORY FOR GOD! May the Lord enable us to see these results in our lives.

OUR CALLING AND ELECTION
2 Peter 1:8-15

Intro: We have completed (for this time) our consideration in 2 Peter 1 of what Peter called, "these things." But we have not completed all that he said about "these things." We have noticed repeatedly that they were so important to Peter that it seems that the rest of his life was to be devoted to talking about "these things." And we are still able to profit from Peter's understanding because the Spirit of God directed him in making what he had to say a part of the Word of God.

But I can't leave this section without pointing out why he felt as strongly as he did about encouraging the people of God in his day to give diligence to add "these" seven "things" to their lives. And, as we have noted, it was not just a one-time matter for each of these seven spiritual characteristics, but it was a continual adding that needed to be done.

Having told us what they are, building upon "faith," he then went on to show their value. And that is what I want to consider with you now.

Notice that, first of all, we have:

I. A CONDITIONAL PROMISE (2 Pet. 1:8).

We have learned in our SS lessons that there are two kinds of promises in Scripture: conditional, and unconditional. A conditional promise is one in which there is something which needs to be done before we can expect a promise to be fulfilled.

It seems to me that the emphasis in this verse is on the word, "abound." If a person is truly a Christian, then "these things" must be in them even though they may be hardly detectable. But it is necessary for them to "abound," i.e., to be increasing, or, to become more and more. A person might be able to imitate these characteristics to a certain degree, but what is needed is for them to be increasingly evident in the life of a child of God.

Now "if" that is the case, then the promise is ours: "They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." What does this mean?

Well, we should know by now that our present object in salvation is to know Christ--to know Him personally, to know Him

intimately. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:18. Spiritual growth is not to be measured by the number of year we have been saved. We cannot always say that so-and-so has been a Christian for twenty years and so he is a mature Christian. That is not always the case. There are people who have been saved much longer than that, but they have never progressed much out of the stage of spiritual infancy. No, a person's growth is to be measured by his likeness to Christ! It is when you see a person becoming more like our Savior that you can know that there is spiritual life there, and spiritual growth.

The word that Peter used for "knowledge" here in verse 8 can be translated, full knowledge. It means a more thorough knowledge, as well as a knowledge that has a powerful influence on the one who has that knowledge. In this case it speaks of a person who knows the Lord in such a way that his or her life has undergone some changes for the good.

To be without this is to be "barren" and "unfruitful." "Barren" ground is ground that is lying idle, that will yield no return, and so is useless. And so it is "unfruitful."

It is not an uncommon thing to meet Christians who know very little about the Lord Jesus Christ. They know that He is the Son of God, that He was born of the virgin Mary, that He lived a perfect life, that He died on the Cross, was raised on the third day, ascended back to heaven, and is coming again. But as far as knowing Him as a personal Friend and Lord, they are like an empty field.

Now let me ask two questions:

- 1) What do the seven characteristics we have considered have to do with knowing Christ?
- 2) Beyond what I have said, why is it important to have a personal, daily relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer to the first question is this: The only place you and I can find these characteristics is in Christ. Therefore, if we are to keep adding those qualities to our lives, we have to deal directly and personally with the Lord Himself. There is no other way to get them.

This calls for prayer, for faith, for waiting upon the Lord, sometimes for confession of our failures. But there is no such thing as adding these qualities to our faith unless we have personal dealings with the Lord. They are all found in Him, and to add them to our lives means that we will become more and more like Him.

The answer to the second question is this: Knowing Christ is the only way we can experience (1) "grace and peace" (v. 2)

which we all need every day, and (2) those things which "pertain to life and godliness" come only "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (v. 3). In both of these verses Paul used the word for a full knowledge.

This means that, if we need "grace and peace," we need Christ, we need to know Him. If we want to be godly, we need Christ, we need to know Him.

That is the reason what Peter called "these things" are so important. As we keep on adding them to our lives, we are brought into closer fellowship with the Lord, and as we come into closer fellowship with the Lord, we will find "grace and peace" for our daily needs, and we will be growing in godliness, growing more Christ-like in our lives.

That ought to be enough to get us started, and to keep us at the job of adding those things to our faith. But there is an "if" we all have to face. Have you been thinking about those things that we have been considering, or did you forget them soon after each service was over? Remember this is A CONDITIONAL PROMISE.

But let me go on to the second point:

II. A STERN WARNING (2 Pet. 1:9).

I do not think that Peter was saying here that the person in whom, lit., these things are not present, was not saved. But he was saying that when these things are not evident in the life of a child of God, he "is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." To say that "he was purged from his old sins" seems to me to be descriptive only of one who really knows the Lord. But he does not show it.

This is the person who is spiritually short-sighted. He has forgotten why he has been saved. He has a greater appreciation for the present than he does the future. He wants to enjoy this life, but he is not preparing for the life that is to come. He looks at the things that he can see with greater interest than at the things which he cannot see.

Now you can begin to see why Peter was so concerned about "these things." There are many of the Lord's people who fall into this category. They are saved, but they are not working at the glorious task of sanctification. It places responsibilities upon us which we must face. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved "unto good works." And there can be no holiness apart from Peter has given us here.

And so the third thing we have in this passage is:

III. AN URGENT EXHORTATION (2 Pet. 1:10, 11).

If we have not been able to see up until now why Peter was so concerned about "these things," we surely ought to be able to see it now.

There are some Christians who are always struggling with the assurance of their salvation. These are usually the people who live on the fringes of what the Word of God teaches. But there is always the possibility that people who are lacking in "these things" are not really saved! One thing that will happen to us if we are adding "these things" to our lives, is that it will give us real assurance of our salvation. It will "make our calling and election sure."

Peter did not debate the doctrine of election here. He knew that there is such a doctrine, and he believed it. Nor did he question the calling of the Lord. We who are chosen are called by God to Christ and to salvation. But what is the purpose of our election. Why has the Lord chosen us? Why did He call us to Himself and to Christ and to salvation? Was it just to save us from hell? NO! That would be wonderful enough, but there is more to salvation than that. We are not only saved from hell, but we are saved for heaven. We are not only saved from our sins, but we are saved unto holiness. As Paul told the Colossians, God is the One:

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,
and hath translated us into the kingdom
of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).

In his letter to the Ephesians (1:4) Paul wrote:

According as he hath chosen us in him (Christ)
before the foundation of the world,
**that we should be holy and without blame
before him.**

It is wonderful to know the doctrine of election. And it is wonderful to know that we have come to Christ because of the call of God. But it is just as important to know why we have been called, why we have been chosen. Whenever we talk about the effectual call of God, we need also to talk about holiness of life. When we talk about our election, we need to remember that God has chosen us to be holy, to be godly in character and in life.

So you can see that Peter was not majoring on a minor point. He was concentrating on the very heart of salvation. He wanted the people of God to know that they were saved, and he wanted them to show by their lives that their salvation was not just a hope-so affair, but that it was real, joyful, and

full of blessing. If you are not a Christian, Peter would knock those false hopes right out from under you--so you will seek the Lord. But, if you are saved, he wants to get you moving!

You have to decide where you are spiritually. May all of our hearts be stirred with a renewed desire to know the Lord as fully as we can, and then to be like Him in every part of our being and our living.

Note what Paul said in verse 11. (Read.) Verse 8 says that it is possible for "these things" to abound in us. Here in verse 11 he said that, if they do, our entrance into "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" will be abundant, too. That is the way I want to go into heaven. I hope you do, too.

Now the last point:

IV. AN APOSTLE'S HELP (2 Pet. 1:12-15)

In verse 9 Peter said that some of us are at least partially blind and very shortsighted; here he said that we have short memories.

In verse 12 Peter said that he was not going to neglect them, he was not going to be careless toward them. And so, although they knew the truth that he was declaring here, he was going to be repeating it again and again.

In verse 13 he told them how long he would keep reminding them of these truths--as long as he lived. And he knew that would not be long because the Lord had shown him that he would soon be in heaven. This is what he said in verse 14.

In verse 15 he put the cap on the whole thing. He had written this all out so that, after he was gone, they would still be reminded of "these things" by his second epistle to them.

Concl: These are the words of a mature apostle, a seasoned servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were some of his last words, and he knew that they were his "swan song," an expression taken from the legendary song which a swan sings when it is dying. It obviously was extremely important to Peter. It was by this that he wanted to be remembered. And it follows that, if it were SO important to Peter, it should be equally important to us. And I can assure you that Peter was one who kept on adding to his faith until he closed his eyes on earth for the last time, and opened them in heaven.