

THE INSTRUCTIONS AND INGREDIENTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Does God want our lives **to be different** from what they were before we were saved? In other words, does God want us as believers **to pursue spiritual** growth? Yes, He does!

How do we know? Because God used Peter to tell us—at least **12** different times—in I and II Peter! For the sake of time, I'll just point out the ones in **II Peter**. Please turn to II Peter 1.

--In 1:2, Peter desires that grace and peace—both gifts from God—**be multiplied** unto them

--In vs 5-7, he wants them to **add things** to their faith

--In 1:8, he tells them he does not want them to be barren or unfruitful

--In the end of 1:10, he tells them that he does not want them to fall

--in 3:11, he wants them to be holy and godly

--In 3:14, he wants them to be without spot and blameless

--In 3:18, he wants them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And let's not forget **why** Peter was telling them these things. Back to chapter 1, vs 14. Somehow, some way, Peter knew his days **were numbered** so this was his farewell address. His burden—his heartbeat—was to remind them to pursue spiritual growth—even though they already knew it! We see that in vs 12-13.

Since Peter doesn't apologize for telling **them something they already know**, I'm not going to either! So after expressing **his desire** for their spiritual growth in vs 2, he reminds them that God's **divine power** has provided them **everything they need** for that growth to take place. But...it doesn't happen automatically—it **requires effort** on our part. We need to **cultivate our relationship** with Christ and we need to know—and rely on—the **exceeding great and precious promises** found in God's Word.

And we see **in vs 4** that God's promises remind us of **two things God's power does**: 1) makes us a partaker of the divine nature; and 2) releases us from the power of sin. We no longer have to serve sin! We are both **able to sin** and **able not to sin**! We are freed from the trap; sin is no longer our master! We have a choice as to who we yield to.

Romans 6:19 "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as **ye have yielded** your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so **now yield your members** servants to righteousness unto holiness." "You used to serve uncleanness and sin—now serve righteousness!"

Now follow along as I read vs 5-7. "Based on your salvation in Christ—and all God has given you and made available to you—**don't do a thing!** Just eat, drink, and be merry, enjoying all that God has given you."

Is that what it says? No; it says the **exact opposite!**

"And beside this"—meaning **for this very reason**—there is something you need **to do!** You **are a recipient** of these wonderful gifts from God—now here is your **responsibility** in light of those gifts!

What are we **to do?** What is our **responsibility?** We are to **add** seven **"ingredients"** to the foundation of our faith. MacArthur points out that this is one of the **many paradoxes** in the Word of God. We have **everything we need** for life and godliness—and yet God wants us to **add to** what we have. How can you add **anything to everything?** Because sanctification/spiritual growth is a cooperative effort between us and God!

Let's consider first... **1. The instructions to pursue spiritual growth**

How are we to pursue spiritual growth? What is the **manner** in which we are to do that?

A. Diligently

Notice again vs 5 "And beside this, giving all diligence..." **Diligence** here carries the idea of earnestness. It is a striving after—a whole-heartedness—in accomplishing something. It means "to make every effort."

Remember the title for this series? I'm calling it **II Peter in Three Words: Working, Warning, and Watching.**

This is where **"working"** comes from. Notice Heb 6:11-12. Here we see that diligence as the opposite of slothfulness—meaning laziness. **Heb 6:11-12** "And we desire that every one of you do **shew the same diligence** to the full assurance of hope unto the end: ¹² **That ye be not slothful**, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

--**Who** is Peter writing to? Believers!

--**Which** believers are supposed to add to their faith? Just the **pastors**? Just the ones who have been **saved a long time**? Just the "**super spiritual**" ones? No!

--**All believers** are to be working hard at their spiritual growth!

And yet, so few believers seem to be working on their faith **at all**—much less working on it **diligently**!

Not only are we to be working **diligently**, we are to be working... B. Deliberately

What does that mean? It means to do something **carefully and intentionally**—not accidentally or by chance.

The verb "add" is **a command**—not a suggestion. God doesn't **ask us** to do it—He **tells us** to do it. But the Greek word used for "add" is far richer than simply **adding** one thing **to another**. It comes from the Greek word "ep-ee-khor-ayg-eh'-o"—a combination of "epi" (on) and "choregeo." We get our words "chorus" and "choreography" from it.

The **meaning** of the word is quite interesting. According to a guy named Hillyer, **the plays** in ancient Greece often required large and expensive choruses (choirs). When a play was put on, a wealthy person from that city would defray the cost for the chorus (choir) and became known as the **choregos**. Although these productions were quite extravagant—and expensive—these donors didn't want people to think they were stingy, so they gave **abundantly**. They **richly supplied** the needs of the choruses. (The Christian Life in Peter's Theology; Fredric R. Howe, BSAC 157:627; pg 310).

So, when Peter says "add to your faith virtue," he does not mean take **a little virtue** and **add it to** your Christian life. Instead, it means to **lavishly, excessively supply it!**

It is also interesting to consider that the once-impulsive, fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants fisherman—Simon Peter—is the one who God uses to "set forth a deliberate, disciplined approach to spiritual growth." (Growing in Godliness (2 Peter 1:5-7), Steven Cole, Bible.org).

2. The ingredients to produce spiritual growth

What are the ingredients for spiritual growth? What are the traits...what are the qualities...what are the "things" we are supposed to be "working hard at lavishly supplying to our faith"? God through Peter lists them here for us in verses 5-7. Before we look at what they mean—and how they relate to one another—we need to make sure we have... A. The required base

It is interesting to me that some suggest there are **eight** ingredients instead of **seven**—with faith being the eighth. Faith is **not** an ingredient—it is the base...the foundation...the starting point—on which the other qualities are to be earnestly and extravagantly added to.

It reminds me of Paul's words in **1 Cor 3:10-12** "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have **laid the foundation**, and another **buildeth thereon**. But let every man take heed **how he buildeth** thereupon. ¹¹ For **other foundation** can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man **build upon this foundation....**"

Whose faith are we to build upon? What does the verse say? "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to **your** faith..." We are to build upon the faith that **we as individuals** possess.

What is faith? I've mentioned this not too long ago, but here it is again. "Faith" sometimes carries the idea of **what** we believe—in other words, **doctrine**. It also carries the idea of **how** we believe—**a conviction**—that what God says, He will do. But here, faith is referring to **saving faith**; in other words, salvation.

What is salvation? What are we saved **from**? We are saved from God's judgment—and being separated from Him forever in the place called hell. It is being saved from everlasting fire is how Jesus stated it.

How do we obtain saving faith? Look at vs 1. It is through the righteousness of God and of Christ. It is coming to God in God's way—through Christ. It is **having** Jesus—not just knowing about Him.

Next, let's consider... B. The relationship between the ingredients

--**How** do these seven ingredients—these qualities and traits—**relate and build** upon one another?

--**How** does virtue—the first one listed—lead to knowledge...and knowledge to temperance...and temperance to patience? It is obviously difficult to know for sure based on the differences of opinions in various commentaries!

--Here's **another** thing we don't know: **Why** did God have Peter select **these seven** qualities—especially in light of the fact that **only two** of them are found in the list of **nine** “fruits of the Spirit” found Gal 5:22-23?

Some suggest it is probably because **these traits** are the **opposite** of those displayed by the false teachers that Peter describes in chapter 2.

Here's what **we do know**, though, and this is what we need to focus on:

1) They are all important! Because God **gives them**—and because God commands us to whole-heartedly and lavishly **pursue them** in our Christian life—each one is required! We can't **neglect some** because we don't like them or because they are too hard—God wants us to work at **all of them!**

2) We need to work on them all at the same time! **Why** do I say that? Because if we had to **perfectly “master”** the first one—virtue—we would never get to the second!

3) We need to know what they mean! I think you'd agree that it is impossible to work on them—to add them—if we aren't sure what God is asking us to add!

Which brings us to... C. The meaning of the ingredients

What I want to do with the rest of our time here this morning is give a brief description of what these ingredients—these qualities—are. After a message (or two) on Thanksgiving, we will come back to this passage and look at **how we go about adding** these things—unless the Lord leads otherwise, of course!

1) Virtue (vs 5). What does virtue mean? We often hear the phrase: “Patience is a virtue.” In that sense, it is a **beneficial quality**. An on-line English dictionary defines virtue as “moral excellence; goodness.” An older definition has “manly strength or courage”—and some suggest that is how it is being used here.

--In the Bible, we have the word here in vs 5—and we have it in vs 3. It is also used by Peter in 1 Peter 2:9 “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the **praises** of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;”

--In 1 Peter 2:9, “praises” comes from the Greek word that “virtue” comes from. Peter is saying we should show forth the “excellencies” of God. Virtue, then, is **moral excellence**. MacArthur writes: it is the “quality of someone's life which makes them stand out as excellent.” **Christ**, of course, is the ultimate example. No one displayed moral excellence or goodness more than Jesus did!

Why do we as believers need moral excellence? **Why** do we need to be morally upright and good? Because it **demonstrates** we have saving faith! Remember what James says in **James 2:18** “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”

2) Knowledge (vs 5). Peter uses a different word for “knowledge” than he uses in verses 2 and 3. In verses 2 and 3, it is first-hand knowledge gained by having a **relationship with Christ**. Here in vs 5 and 6, it has to do with what we **know and understand**. But it is **more** than that. It is **applying what we learn** to **how we live**. Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines it as: “moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living.”

Why do we need knowledge? Because we need to **know** what is right in order **to do** what is right! It is impossible to be morally excellent if we don't know what moral excellence looks like! We need **discernment** to guide our **doing**. Where does discernment and knowledge and wisdom come from? From the Bible, right? Psalm 119:99 “I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy **testimonies** are my meditation.” Proverbs 2:6 “For the Lord **giveth wisdom**: out of His mouth **cometh knowledge and understanding**.”

3) Temperance (vs 6). Temperance is not one of those words we use very often. It means moderation or self-restraint; in other words, **self-control**. It is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. Zane Hodges suggests that in Peter's day it probably indicated: “personal prudence which avoided extremes and led to moderation rather than self-indulgence.”

Is **self-control** important? An athlete will certainly tell you it is! You can't eat what you want...and drink what you want...and sleep when you want...and exercise when you want—then go out and play football in the NFL on Sundays! Paul uses a very similar Greek word in **1 Cor 9:25** "And every man that striveth for the mastery is **temperate** in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

Is an athlete the **only one** who has to use self-control? Obviously not because God tells us **as believers** that we need to lavishly add it to our Christian lives! **Why** do we believers need self-control? Can we have a life characterized by moral excellence if we let our passions **control us**? How many **pastors** are out of the ministry because they failed to exercise self-control?

4) Patience (vs 6). Unlike "temperance"—a word we **rarely** use—"patience" is a word we use **often**. Our normal usage is slightly different than how the Bible uses it, however. We think of patience as exhibiting calmness in the face of chaos—and self-control when someone (or something) is provoking us or annoying us.

In the Bible, **patience** carries the idea of steadfastness, constancy, and endurance. Simply put, it is the perseverance that drives a man to be loyal to his faith—and to God—regardless of the suffering and trials that come his way.

The word "patience" comes from occurs 32 times in the Greek NT. Some of the more familiar ones are Hebrews 12:1 where the second half of the verse says "...let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Another familiar passage is found in James 1. Notice **James 1:2-3** on your outline "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh **patience**."

When our faith is put to the test because of trials, it **requires endurance**—but it also leads to more endurance. **Why do believers** need endurance—a steadfastness—in the face of trials? Because it is an indicator of our faith! It shows our trust is in God—and that our joy is not dependent on circumstances!

5) Godliness (vs 6). Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words defines godliness as "that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him" (pg 162). Michael Green defines it as a "very practical awareness of God in every aspect of life." (As quoted by Frederic R. Howe; ref above). The word occurs 15 times in the Greek NT—with Paul using it 10 of those 15 times. One of the more familiar verses is probably 1 Tim 4:8 "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but **godliness** is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Why do we need godliness—a Godward attitude and awareness in every aspect of life? Because if you only have reverence and respect for God **while you are at church**, most of our life will be characterized by **not having** an awareness of God!

How does godliness come about from endurance? I love how Zane Hodges ties the two together: "Out of the trials of life can come not only the quality of 'perseverance,' but also a deepening of our reverence and awe for the living God. Not only can we come to acknowledge His sovereign control over our lives—including His right to send us hard times—but we can also learn to praise Him for the mercies He grants in our deepest times of need." (*Make Your Calling and Election Sure: An Exposition of 2 Peter 1:5-11*; JOTGES 11:1; Spr 1998).

6) Brotherly kindness (vs 7).

The **two words** "brotherly kindness" comes from **one** Greek word—a word that you actually know quite well! You might not realize it is a Greek word, though. It is the name of a city! Anyone care to guess?

The answer is... **Philadelphia**; aka as the "city of brotherly love." In fact, the other 4 times this word is used in the Bible it is translated "brotherly love" or "love of the brethren."

We know what brotherly love is, don't we? The brothers—and sisters—that we are to have affection and kindness toward is a reference to our brothers and sisters **in Christ**.

Fellow believers—your spiritual siblings—are to have a special place in your heart. Why? Because you have the same Father—God; and the same future—heaven! We'll talk about this more in the future but notice... **Romans 15:7** "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

When we **have godliness**—the right attitude and reverence **toward God**—that will enable us to have the right attitude—and **affection**—toward **fellow believers**.

7) Charity (vs 7). **What** is charity? Charity is the old English word for "love." But it is the kind of love that is more than just a sentimental feeling—and encompasses more than affection for fellow believers. It is

broader in scope—and deeper in depth. Charity—love—comes from the Greek word “ag-ah’-pay”—the love that God has for us and was demonstrated by Him coming to earth in the person of Christ to die for our sins.

It is driven by the will—not our emotions. It results in action—not just words. And it is a self-sacrificing, unconditional commitment that seeks the good of the one who is loved—even if the one loved is undeserving ...and unlovable...and unresponsive. Romans 5:8 captures this meaning well: **Rom 5:8** “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Why do we need to work hard at loving others—even our enemies? Because that is what Jesus **did**—and that is what Jesus wants us **to do!**

Mt 5:44-45 “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ⁴⁵ That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

So what would God have us do in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First, what is your attitude toward spiritual growth? We are to be striving—working hard—at lavishly supplying these qualities to our lives. Are you doing that? Do you **want** to do that?

--If not, **you are disobeying** what God through Peter tells us to do.

Don’t keep on disobeying!

2. Second, this is a “tall order.” These are not qualities that we have naturally—but they are qualities that God wants us to have and can produce in us.

--It takes time—and consistency.

--Don’t quit...don’t get discouraged...keep on keeping on!

3. Third, are you saved? Are you born again? Is there a new nature within you that wants to please God? If not, that is where you need to start.

In just a moment, we are going to sing “Face to Face.” The chorus ends with these words: “Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by.”

We will all stand before Christ. What will you hear from Him? What will Jesus say to you?

--Well done, thou good and faithful servant

OR --I never knew you, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire?