

61-01-01 The Growing Soul
growth, character, virtues, discipleship
2 Peter 1:3-9

The Christian life is the growth of God's life in us.

INTRODUCTION:

–Most know Christ's Beatitudes; many know Paul's list of Spirit fruits; but few know Peter's list of *graces for Christian growth*. Peter presents these as *successive stages in our growth in Christian character*, which is actually *God's own character*. **HOM.idea.**

I. Why Must Faith Be the Foundation? (*faith is first in the list....*)

- A. Faith is the big turning point where *despair* and *condemnation* is rejected and the possibility of change and reform is accepted.
- B. Faith depends on the power of God, **v.3**, *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (God' power plants a seedling of new life and cultivates in us a new character in Christ's image.)*
- C. Faith admires Christ and aspires to be like Him, by...
 1. knowing Him (not spontaneously; *faith invests the time it takes*)
 2. adopting His purpose–“*his own glory*” (to be revealed in us)
 3. accessing the power of Christ's life– “*his own... goodness*”

TRANS: The Christian life is the growth of God's life in us. We must not stop at a beginning faith, but add to faith's foundation the superstructure of Christian virtues intended for our growing souls.

II. How Can We Build a Christian Character?

- A. God has funded the project– **v.4**, *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*
 1. God's *promises* are validated in Christ– **2 Cor 1:20**, For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God. (The power of positive thinking in Christ appropriates “promises”)
 2. Christ-likeness is not a special *status*, but the “*divine nature*”
 - a. The Greeks felt we all had a *divine nature* inherently, but human experience disproves this [crime, moral failure, lust].

- b. Christianity teaches that all can share in God's nature, but only through Christ– **John10:10b** (Amp), I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance—to the full, till it overflows. [one ECF said, “*He became what we are to make us what He is.*”]
- B. We must be committed to work on the project– **v.5**, “*make every effort to add*” (the idea of both haste and diligence, full attention)
 1. [Aesop's Ants & the Grasshopper: “If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter.”]
 2. [“*to add*”(epichoregeo) how public benefactors lavishly supplied the choruses in Greek plays.] (Our life is a drama that is always *on stage*.)
- C. These building materials (**v.6-7**) form the superstructure of discipleship– **Luke 14:27-30**, And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' [The unfinished house: it's skeleton has a sad pitiful look to it.]
 1. “*goodness*” (*virtue*, from “*man*,” the *image of God*, set apart from beasts and bestly behavior for “moral excellence,” as a good citizen or friend; the *courage* to do the right thing.)
 2. “*knowledge*”– “*a practical understanding of...*”
 - a. **oneself**, one's own *weaknesses, gifts, background, limitations*: essential to wise judgement and decisions.
 - b. **others**, their problems and lives: essential to sympathy.
 - c. **our world** and **its times**: essential for effective witness.
 3. “*self-control*” [lit., to get a grip of oneself] (“mastering ones desires and passions”) [the desert monks used *fasts, vigils, and voluntary poverty as tools to learn to say “no” to lust, laziness, greed and self-indulgence]*
 4. “*perseverance*”– “not swerving from deliberate purpose and loyalty to faith and devotion even by the greatest trials and sufferings”– **1 Cor 15:58**, Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.
 5. “*godliness*” (“*good worship*” that devoutly honors God and treats others with integrity [Xenophon described Socrates using eusebeia: “He was so pious and devoutly religious that he would take no step apart from the will of heaven; so just and upright that he never did even a trifling injury to any living soul; so self-controlled, so temperate, that he never at any time chose the sweeter instead of the better; so sensible, so wise, and so prudent that in distinguishing the better from the worse he never erred.”])

6. “*brotherly kindness*” [*philadelphia*] (a love in which Christians cherish each other as brothers or sisters, not considering the intimacy of true fellowship an intrusion or nuisance, but becoming affectionately attached to the Body of Christ.)
7. “*love*” [*agape*] (the *capstone of Christian character*)
 - a. no greater virtue than this self-sacrificing love shown by Christ
 - b. *AGAPE* is Who God proclaims Himself to be.

TRANS: This is the *goal of the growing Christian soul*: to have God's life lived out in us. This is God's ultimate intention for our salvation: *for us to be like Him.... for us to “participate in the divine nature.”*

III. What Measures Our Success in Christian Growth? (v.8)

- A. Do you “*possess these qualities*”? (Perhaps not all there is in each of them, but we should have something of each one of all of them!)
- B. Are they “in increasing measure”? (What you *do* have must keep on growing: *growth is change; no change is stagnation*).
- C. “they will *keep* you” [“*ordain, establish*”] (failure prevention) [God's HMO: “Health Maintenance Ordination” by being kept...
 1. “*from being ineffective ... in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*”—[“*lazy, shunning the duty of labor*”] (God has no desire to fashion us into “*armchair theologians*”—or worse— into “*pew potatoes.*”)
 2. “(*from being*) unproductive...” [“barren of fruit” from the *divine nature*)] Christ asks us a rhetorical question: “Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?”)

CONCLUSION: **The Christian life that follows our conversion is the growth of God's life in our souls.** Growing in the way Peter describes is not an option— **v.9**, *But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.* We believed God's promise to save our soul through Christ. We must also *by faith* appropriate His “*great and precious promises*” to grow in Him.

2 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV)

3His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

4Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;

7and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

8For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.