

The Importance of Christian Growth

II Peter 1:5-11

Introduction:

- The Christian life is about growing! II Peter 3:18, “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- There are two things happening out in nature: living things are growing, and dead things are decaying- One of those processes is happening in our Christian life!
- The foundation or keynote- faith
 - Add to your faith
 - Salvation is not the end, but just the beginning!
 - More than just avoiding Hell
 - Giving all diligence- not by accident, but on purpose! With haste and urgency!
 - The scope of the list demonstrates that God wants us to have a well-rounded Christian life, complete in every fashion. We can't be content with an incomplete Christian life. It's not vain to want the best God has for us!

I. **HOW TO GROW IN YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE –V. 5-7**

- a. There is a clear distinction in scripture regarding saving faith
 - i. Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness- faith is not a work, or something to be added for salvation
 - ii. We are working, not simply toward victory, but from victory!
 - iii. Salvation and discipleship (some here have mixed the two and are living in misery!)
 - iv. Becoming a Christian, living as a Christian
- b. The seven graces
 - i. Virtue- courage, i.e. virtus characterized Roman manhood
 - 1. Courage, strength, valor
 - 2. Prov. 28:1b “The righteous are bold as a lion.”
 - 3. Hebrew midwives Ex. 2- feared God
 - 4. Christian coming clean, spouse apologizing, being a Gospel witness

5. The three Hebrews, who refused to bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar
 6. Peter and John, in refusing to obey men, rather than God
- ii. Knowledge- to know
 1. I cor. 2:14- spiritual discernment
 2. The highest knowledge is the knowledge of God- Hosea 6:4, 6
 - iii. Temperance- self control; Spirit-control
 1. Temperance- if we have a right understanding and knowledge of outward comforts, we shall see that their worth and usefulness are vastly inferior to those of spiritual mercies. Bodily exercises and bodily privileges profit but little, and therefore are to be esteemed and used accordingly.
 2. Romans 13:14- "and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."
 3. Illustr- Master control switch over your flesh!
 - iv. Patience- endurance
 1. Endurance; standing the test
 2. Signs that we do not have this is worry, doubt, and complaining
 - v. Godliness
 1. Godliness- 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. I Tim 4:8
 2. Opposite is ungodly- leaving God out of your life
 3. Dependence on God
 4. Devotion to God
 5. The transformed life- studying God's word, becoming more like Him!
 6. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.
 - vi. Brotherly kindness- love for the brethren
 1. Philadelphia

2. John 13:35
3. Brotherly kindness- Paul and Onesimus
4. Preferring one another- putting others first!

vii. Charity- love

1. Not only for believers, but for sinners as well
2. Hate the sin, love the sinner
3. Agape- the highest form of love
4. Unconditional- love with no strings attached
5. Shown by acts of affection, good will, benevolence
6. 3 Greek words- Phileo, Eros, Agape-What is the difference between these words? Someone has said that eros is all take, for one's own self satisfaction is the goal. Phileo, brotherly love, is give and take. And agape is all give.

II. HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE GROWING – V. 8, 10-11

- a. The abundant life- John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."
 - i. "if these things be in you..." not just external religious rituals, but that which is inside the Christian!
 - ii. They have tasted and seen that the Lord is good!
- b. If we have these things, and abound in these things, it is evident to everyone that we are not barren nor unfruitful in our knowledge of Jesus.
- c. Make your calling and election sure
 - i. Election
 1. Always refers to saved people
 2. It is according to foreknowledge (I Peter 1:2). Does not conflict with man's free will. God has elected those who have trusted Christ to be with him forever, and to become like Christ
 3. God does not arbitrarily choose some for salvation and some for damnation- II Peter 3:9
 4. Election means that Christians have been predestined to a glorious future
 - ii. Calling- in time, made evident

1. Calling is that divine work of the Holy Spirit which convicts us of sin, and convinces us to trust in Christ. Bring us to the place of a “faith response”
 2. Eph 4:1- I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
 3. We need to understand the glorious truth that we are a part of God’s divine plan, and he has called us for a special purpose!
- iii. Important implications for our assurance of salvation
1. Security of the believer is an objective truth that cannot be changed
 - a. You are saved not because you feel like it
 - b. But because God says so in His word.
 2. But an individual’s personal assurance of that can be disturbed by how you live!- I John 5:13
 3. Illustr- we don’t wonder if we are married, but we have to make our marriage sure- meaningful! Phil. 2:12-13
 4. Make your calling and election trustworthy, stable, firm
- iv. We cannot make our call and election more sure than they already are: God’s eternal purposes cannot be thwarted. But, we confirm them by growing in likeness to Christ. We provide **unmistakeable evidence** when we manifest the fruit of the Spirit- a holy life proves the reality of our salvation to the world. The peril lies in spiritual idleness
- v. For if you do these things you will **never** fall: Continual growth and progress in the Christian life is the sure way to keep from backsliding.
- d. Albert Barnes, “The essential idea in the passage before us seems to be, that...we are not to be satisfied with one virtue, but that there is to be
- i. (1.) a diligent CULTIVATION of our virtues
 - ii. (2.) that there is to be PROGRESS made from one virtue to another

III. NOTICE A GROWTH DISORDER- V. 8-10

- a. Near sighted
 - i. Losing sight of the great salvation we have
 - ii. Shortsightedness, blindness
 - iii. Perhaps this one has forgotten how bad he was, and how much he needed this cleansing. Perhaps this one has forgotten the great cost of this purging of

sin's dirty stain. Perhaps this one has forgotten how great and complete the cleansing is, making a once guilty sinner now as pure and as white as snow

iv. Nearsighted Christians- can't see the bigger picture of life!

b. Barren, unfruitful

i. V. 8 barren, unfruitful-speaks to a public testimony

ii. The abundant life- John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." - John 7:38-impacting others!

iii. Ineffective life and service

c. Are you growing as you should as a believer?

Conclusion:

- Abundant entrance into Heaven- Peter here reminded his readers of the great reward of a calling and election made sure. They would enter heaven gloriously,
- "A Christian on his deathbed spoke these words: 'I shall be satisfied if I can but creep into heaven on my hands and knees.'
- We can easily understand the spirit which prompted those words; he felt his service was as nothing compared with his need for God's mercy. At the same time there is another sense in which the words are not rightly applicable to the Christian, or Peter speaks of our having an abundant entrance given us in the everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11).
- Peter was not satisfied with a bare entrance into heaven. His desire was that both he and his converts would have the fullest possible Christian life here below, and then enter fully into the joy of the Lord above. This is the true Christian life—the life of fullness, power, depth and reality."
- We all have to start somewhere. But we must determine to yield and allow God help us grow in grace!