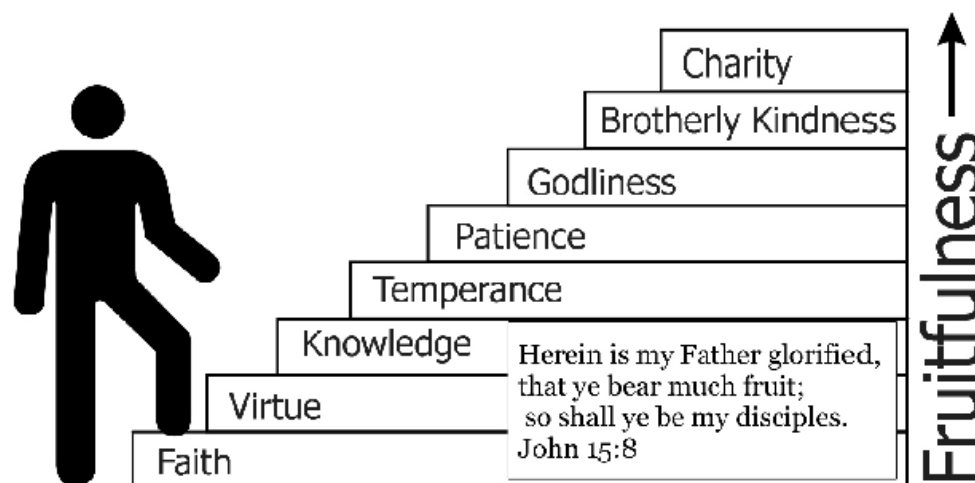


Solid Steps of Christian Growth

A Study of 2 Peter 1:1-11

Instructor's Edition

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. Psalm 37:23,24



The Bible Companion Series of Bible Studies

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Hymn - Higher Ground

Johnson Oatman, Jr., 1898 (1856-1922)

I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Chorus

*Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith on heaven's table-land,
A higher plane than I have found: Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*

My heart has no desire to stay Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where these abound, My prayer, my aim is higher ground.

I want to live above the world, Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound, The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray, 'til heaven I've found "Lord, lead me on to higher ground."

Main Scripture to Study 2 Peter 1:1-11

Scripture	Key Words Defined
<p>1 ¶ Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:</p> <p>2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,</p> <p>3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:</p> <p>4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.</p> <p>5 ¶ And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;</p> <p>6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;</p> <p>7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.</p> <p>8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p>9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.</p> <p>10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:</p> <p>11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>“his divine power” is the power a Christian relies on to first save them, and then to change them.</p> <p>“promises” are what God makes to us – not what we make to God! “partakers” are those who take received the person of Jesus Christ into their lives “the divine nature” refers to Jesus Christ, and His perfect, God-nature that now indwells every believer. “corruption” is the effect of sin on a life – it ruins a person’s life “giving all diligence” means to work very hard at adding these things to your life “faith” is believing God as He promised in His word “virtue” is the inner strength to do right “knowledge” is personally knowing something to be true, not just accepting it as true “temperance” is submitting your self to God’s will and God’s Holy Spirit “patience” is the ability to put up with trials and troubles without complaining “godliness” is living and thinking like Jesus did “brotherly kindness” is loving believers like family “charity” is living completely unselfishly</p> <p>“barren”, “unfruitful” is when a Christian is useless to God “calling and election” is God’s perfect will and plan for your life – make it sure and steadfast so you don’t fall out!</p>

Introduction to Our Study

2Peter 1:1-11

I. The Audience Peter is Talking To (2Peter 1)

- A. Two Letters (Epistles) written by the Apostle Peter
 - 1. First Peter is all about encouragement, in the trials (1Pet 1:6-8)
 - 2. Second Peter is about staying on track in spite of so many pressures and temptations
- B. People needed to know how to go on and grow without Peter being around – he was leaving (2Pet 1:14,15) – our growth is not to be dependant upon people, or upon miracles, or upon good days and sunshine – but rather on truth, and the presence of the Lord Jesus in your life!
- C. God orders our steps (lays them out ahead of us in the Scriptures), and expects us to take those steps. Not an option!
- D. God gave us three things to make sure we continue growing: His Word, His Holy Spirit, and His local Church – we need each other!
- E. The audience is believers
 - 1. “Obtained like precious faith” – same faith as Peter and John had
 - 2. People who had the righteousness of God and Jesus Christ!
- F. Peter was concerned that Christians would know some things (2)
 - 1. That God has given to us “**all things** that pertain to life and godliness” just because we know somebody – Jesus!
 - 2. That God has promised us PRECIOUS (rare) promises
 - 3. That we would be like Jesus – “partaker of the divine (God) nature”
 - 4. Now that you have been made free (escaped) the ruin in this world

II. The Task (1:5) – what God is commanding us to do

- A. Look at the Christian’s responsibility! “**Giving all diligence**” means for you, and you, and YOU to work very hard at adding these things to your life. Not easy! But necessary!
- B. Christian growth is more about ADDING things to our life than just doing more things. The world wants to block-out God, and subtract things from our lives, but God has made available some things that if we would just add them to our way of thinking, and our way of living, we would be successful (bear fruit, and prosper) as Christians!
- C. *Constantly adding* is going to be the key – like adding healthy foods to your diet in order to grow. Can’t just eat an apple once, and expect to be healthy for the next six weeks – you have to add lots of fruit to your diet, and add lots of vegetables, and add lots of exercise, and add lots of laughter, and so on, to be healthy! Amen!?

III. The Staring Point – Level Ground – where do we begin?

- A. We all start as sinners, lost, separated from God, doomed, law-breakers, enslaved by Satan, destined for hell
- B. Then one day, we found out about forgiveness, and the righteousness of God that was available to us because of Jesus Christ
- C. That’s the day a sinner like me, like you, by simple, child-like faith accepted what Jesus did on the cross as enough to save your soul, forgive you of your sins, and make you a child of almighty God!
- D. THAT is where every believer begins – not at baptism, or in confirmation, or with good works, or according to what country you were born in, or what religion your parents were!

IV. The Steps to Take – addition, integration of Biblical things into your life (Psalm 37:23,24)

- A. Here is a great truth:
 - 1. Salvation is a free gift received by faith
 - 2. Spiritual Growth is a process, experienced by diligent and hard work
- B. There are Eight steps for every Christian to take – not all at once
 - 1. **Faith** is believing God as He promised in His word – increase it!
 - 2. **Virtue** is the inner strength to do right
 - 3. **Knowledge** is personally knowing something to be true, not just accepting it as true
 - 4. **Temperance** is submitting your self to God’s will and God’s Holy Spirit (allowing someone else to control your life)
 - 5. **Patience** is the ability to go through troubles without complaining

6. **Godliness** is living and thinking like Jesus did
 7. **Brotherly Kindness** is loving believers like family
 8. **Charity** is living completely unselfishly
- C. Each one of the above items affect different things in our lives – they each have a different affect on different areas of our life
1. **Faith** is directed towards God and pleases God
 2. **Virtue** is directed towards sin, and resists temptation
 3. **Knowledge** is directed towards our problems and the uncertainty in handling those problems
 4. **Temperance** is directed towards self
 5. **Patience** is directed towards the promises of God
 6. **Godliness** is directed towards the world
 7. **Brotherly Kindness** is directed towards believers
 8. **Charity** is directed towards everyone!

V. The Goal (2Pet 1:8-11)

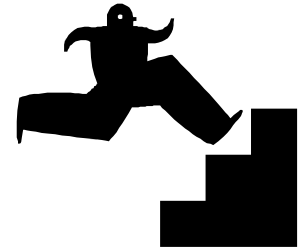
- A. To be fruitful (John 15:8), successful in your Christian life!
- 2Peter 1:1-11 is the formula for being a success as a Christian: Bearing fruit, being useful to God, honouring God by your life, laying up treasures in heaven, being steadfast, having inner stability, being confident and unashamed, and ultimately, receiving praise in heaven one day (2Pet 1:11)
- B. To stand instead of constantly falling (Ephesians 6:11,13)
1. Jesus Christ DIED and rose again to make godly MEN out of you men
 2. Jesus Christ DIED and rose again to make godly WOMEN out of you ladies
 3. Ask yourself, “*Am I more like Jesus today, or more like the world around me?*”
 4. If you are backsliding, and weakening, then THIS is the programme for you
 5. As a matter of fact, the only way NOT to backslide, is to go forward and constantly, consistently grow!
 6. Your “**calling and election**”(2Pet 2:10) is knowing God’s perfect will and plan for your life – YOU have the responsibility to make it sure and steadfast so you don’t fall; so you don’t mess-up; so you don’t wimp-out in the battles of life! Like a cliff-climber: make each bracket firm and sure!!!
- C. To hear “Well done!” at your entrance into heaven (Matthew 25:21)

VI. The Dangers of Stagnation – staying in one place too long

- A. Success is Conditional
1. Give all diligence (2Pet 1:5)
 2. “IF... these abound...”
- B. It is impossible to stay in one place – you will either ...
1. Backslide
 2. Or, Press forward
- C. No growth means... (1:8-11)
1. You lose sight – spiritual awareness
 2. You lose memory – forgetting spiritual victories
 3. You lose progress – constantly fall back
 4. You lose heavenly rewards
- D. God calls it becoming “**barren**”, “**unfruitful**” when we are not what we could be – that’s when a Christian is useless to God and ends up with nothing spiritual accumulated in his/her life
1. The apostle Paul feared very few things, but one of them was becoming useless to God (1Cor 9:27)
 2. Christians are called to “follow Christ” - not retire, or go on holiday, or drag your feet – that is when the devil starts his attack (like when a lion stalks a herd, he focuses on the ones that are not with the herd, or are weak, or are independent, etc)!
 3. This is a day when the Christian life then must be lived with diligence.
 4. Young people may not know what the word 'diligence' means. It means to NOT “go with the flow!”
 - a. Many people simply float along with the stream. It is so easy to do because, if that is the way the current is going, then all they need to do is bob along with everything else that is floating down the stream. No hassles, right?

- b. Some churches and some Christians, for a long time have been going that way: bobbing along with the “river of life.” The tide or the stream is taking them out, and they are headed for disaster.
 - c. In order to go against the stream and against the tide, Christians will have to work very hard to keep their souls and minds in a right frame and attitude, if they are going to hold their ground and even make progress against the stream and against the tide of this modern world. These are the people who will gain the true blessing of God in the end.
5. Peter saw this scenario in his day. You and I, unless we are blind, must also see it today. The choice therefore is between drifting with the stream, and with the current, and with the tide on the one hand or going against it, in order to maintain high Biblical values, and in order to hear a hearty “well done” from our Lord in the end!
6. The fruit of the Christian includes:
- a. The winning of a soul to Christ
 - b. The defeat of a sin and of Satan’s plans
 - c. Wouldn’t someone here today like to have that fruit be a result of their walk with Christ? I would!
7. Oh the blessing and joy of being not just a Christian, but a fruitful Christian!
- E. Remember - God Calls us to be patient Builders – fruit is not something that happens overnight!
- 1. Our “**calling and election**” is God’s perfect will and plan for your life – make it sure and steadfast so you don’t fall out!
 - 2. What is God’s calling for Christians? What is His calling for YOU?

Faith is the First Step
Believing God As He Promised In His Word
2 Corinthians 5:7



I. Introduction - Christianity begins with FAITH (Acts 27:25)

- A. Faith is **believing and trusting in God**
- B. You start with faith as the first step, and then constantly add to it.
 - 1. The Christian is saved by faith
 - 2. And the Christian continues to live by faith. That's the only way to live.
- C. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "***We walk by faith, not by sight.***"
- D. Many people say, "We're worried about what's happening in the world" or "If things don't change in our world, we're finished." Christians shouldn't live that way. We don't live by the media; we don't live in fear! We live by faith in the eternal God.
- E. God wants us to live in absolute dependence on Him. By faith we believe God enough that He is still able to bring more people into His Kingdom, and able to send out more to preach, teach, and serve. We believe God for the funds, for the buildings, and whatever it takes to do the work He wants us to do. God has always proven Himself faithful. People can get upset over many things, but I can't get upset over them when I know that everything is under God's control – that's faith!

II. There are Two kinds of Faith: Wrong Faith and Right Faith

A. Wrong Faith – Wasted Faith

- 1. Blind faith, guessing kind of faith, hoping, trying, wishing for something to happen, with no idea and no guarantee that it will happen
- 2. A neglecting faith that leaves firm beliefs to parents, and to pastors, and to religious fanatics
 - a. Many trust their priest's faith, who may be trusting their bishop's faith, who may be trusting their cardinal's faith, who may be trusting their pope's faith, who may be dead!
 - b. Don't try and ride on ANYONE'S spiritual coat-tails!
- 3. Trusting ANY other source for truth other than the Bible – period!
 - a. Your Experiences – “well, I know what I saw...”
 - b. Your Feelings – “I just can get over how I feel...”
 - c. Your Past – “How could God ever forgive ME?”
 - d. Astrology, evolution, superstitions

B. Right Faith – or Real Faith (Heb 11:1; 2Peter 1:1)

- 1. Real Faith has **substance** – it is the substance of my hope – it is built upon the facts of things you have not seen (Job 26:7; Isa 40:22)
- 2. Real faith is **precious** (rare) – so many claim to “believe” but all they do is “go along with what they are taught” – they have the faith of devils (James 2:19).
 - a. Not everyone who says Lord Lord (talks spiritual) is a child of God
 - b. Not everyone who prays and tries their hardest is going to heaven
 - c. It is rare to find someone with the faith of a child
 - d. The **FIRST** step here is to GET YOUR FAITH RIGHT!
- 3. Real faith is **common** – it is universal – it's for everyone – not just pastors, missionaries, evangelists, old people, and people who have nothing else to live for
 - a. It is for thieves on a cross (thief on the cross)
 - b. It is for Kings on their throne (Agrippa)
 - c. It is for Moms (2Tim 1:5)
 - d. It is for Dads
 - e. It is for Rebels
 - f. It is for the quiet ones too
 - g. It is for absolutely everybody, no matter how messed up your life may be
- 4. Real faith is **Proven** (2Pet 1:4; 1Pet 1:5-7)
 - a. Did you know that you can prove your faith to be real, and right?
 - b. If your faith grows stronger in the fires and trials, then it is real!

- c. If however, your faith weakens and shrinks in the troubles and trials of life, then clearly, it is somehow flawed, and filled with dross, and with wrong concepts (PICTURE OF IMPURE SILVER)
- 5. Real faith is Biblical (1Thes 2:13)
 - a. To be a Christian at all, in any true sense, you must believe the words of the Word of God – the Bible; that is the starting point.
 - b. Do you believe the Word of God?
 - c. Do we take the Bible's attitudes for our attitudes? Never mind what some clever men and women (Oprah Winfrey, etc) are saying on TV to the contrary;
 - d. Do we believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, just as he said?
 - e. Do we believe that God is Lord of history and of destiny? Most people are FATALISTS – plain and simple – NO FAITH AT ALL!
 - f. Do we believe that GOD is in charge of the international affairs of the world, and He is steering and guiding world events, and even overruling them in order to bring about His purpose? (Thank God)!
 - g. Do we believe He is Lord over our life, and has a supreme claim upon your life and mine? Supreme claim!
 - h. Do we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Come in the flesh
 - i. Do we believe that He is the only Saviour of this world?
 - j. THAT is what it means to have 'faith'.
 - k. "Faith is an empty hand taking the gift of truth from the hand of God."
- 6. **Reality Check:** If we haven't got faith, then of course, we are not really Christians at all. To go to church, and NOT believe in the words of this Book, is to admit you are NOT a Christian, and are in need of the Saviour! Jesus said to His Father, "Thy word is truth!" (John 17:17)

III. The Effect of Faith

- A. Accesses the free gift of forgiveness and salvation from hell (Eph 2:8,9)
- B. Accesses peace with God (Rom 5:1)
- C. Pleases God – not your efforts, but your faith in Him (Heb 11:6)
- D. Gets answers to your needs (Mk 11:24)
- E. Brings all good things into your life (2Pet 1:3) just by personally knowing Jesus!

IV. How to Grow Your Faith (Luke 17:5; Mark 9:24)

- A. **Constantly Feed it** (Rom 10:17) – I know I am a broken record here
 - 1. God help us all to feed on the pages of this book
 - 2. I love devouring a good cup of coffee – same with reading and studying the truths in the words of this Book!
 - 3. Does your faith stand up well against troubles? If not, then MORE BIBLE!
 - 4. There is not a person in this room who couldn't confess that they are too busy! Not feeding on this Book – maybe snacking, maybe being spoon fed on a Sunday – but too many in this room are STARVING their faith!
 - 5. To grow your confidence IN GOD, then get into this Bible starting in Matthew and work your way through to Rev, and then genesis through to the very end!
 - 6. Suggest a notebook – write something down every time you read! Something, anything! Just write down a thought from what you read – it will be sweet what happens to your faith and your very life!
- B. **Constantly Force it** – use your faith, doing good works, trusting God for every outcome – make yourself obey that Book!
 - 1. You may say, "I don't have much" – you have enough, believe me
 - 2. It is not the amount of faith you have, it is whether it all rests on Jesus Christ and His promises!
- C. **Constantly Fight with it**
 - 1. Wrestling with your spiritual enemy by FAITH instead of by sight will make you stronger and better at it with time and experience (2Co 10:3-5)
 - 2. This is hard because by habit we only fight like we always have – hard to learn how to think differently, and act differently
 - 3. That's why we first FEED on the word of God – it DOES change us - miraculously

D. Constantly Live in it

1. Faith is not something in a Book, or a creed to memorise: it is the key to the unseen world of the Spirit-filled life of the believer that walks above the world, and above the trials, and above the limitations of the flesh.
2. This one step (increasing your faith) will enable you to take each of the next steps presented in 2Peter 1 – without a good strong foundation of confidence and faith in God’s promises, you will lose your footing, and fall hard (2Pet 1:10).

V. What if You Don’t Increase Your Faith?

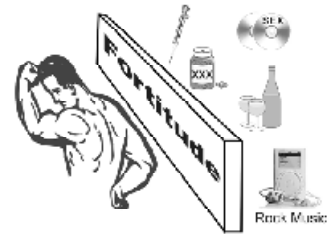
- A. Simply, you will fall – you won’t lose your salvation, but you could lose everything else: Your joy, your peace, your purpose, your confidences, your blessings
- B. Secondly, you will never succeed at anything of value – every success without dependence upon God is vanity (Solomon finally figured that truth out) – everything will only pass on to someone else, will only crumble to dust, will be stolen, or will die. Faith in the eternal God is where eternal life is found, and eternal rewards and eternal treasures, and eternal joy!
- C. Lastly, without strong, growing, vibrant faith, the devil will make mince out of your life – ruin your mind, and especially your heart (1Pet 5:8,9)!
- D. A Christian cannot live without a confident faith in the Lord! They will ONLY shrivel up, dry up, and ultimately die!

VI. Conclusion (Luke 8:25; Hebrews 12:2)

- A. Where is your faith?
 1. Do you have any? Has it been stolen, been run over, been ruined by sin, and the world?
 2. Thankfully, according to Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is the author **and the finisher** of our faith
 3. If you let Him lead, and you just follow, by faith, you will finally have found life – eternal life
 4. It all begins on the level ground, just under the cross
 5. Come to God as a sinner (I am talking to Moms and dads, teens and grandpa’s, Nans and businessmen, and women), and if you will come to Christ Jesus by faith – not by sight remember (no statues here) – but by faith, believing this Bible to be true, and if you will ask God to forgive your sins, He will! And better than that, He will make you His child!
- B. So. How big is your faith? I think all of us need some serious boosting, some serious growth in the area of our trust in God, and His word
- C. This week, we all need to take a good look in this Book of books, and read it tonight and stay reading it until our faith starts shining bright and strong no matter how dark the night!
- D. Let’s stand together!

Virtue

The Inner Strength To Do Right
“Add to your faith virtue”
Philippians 4:8

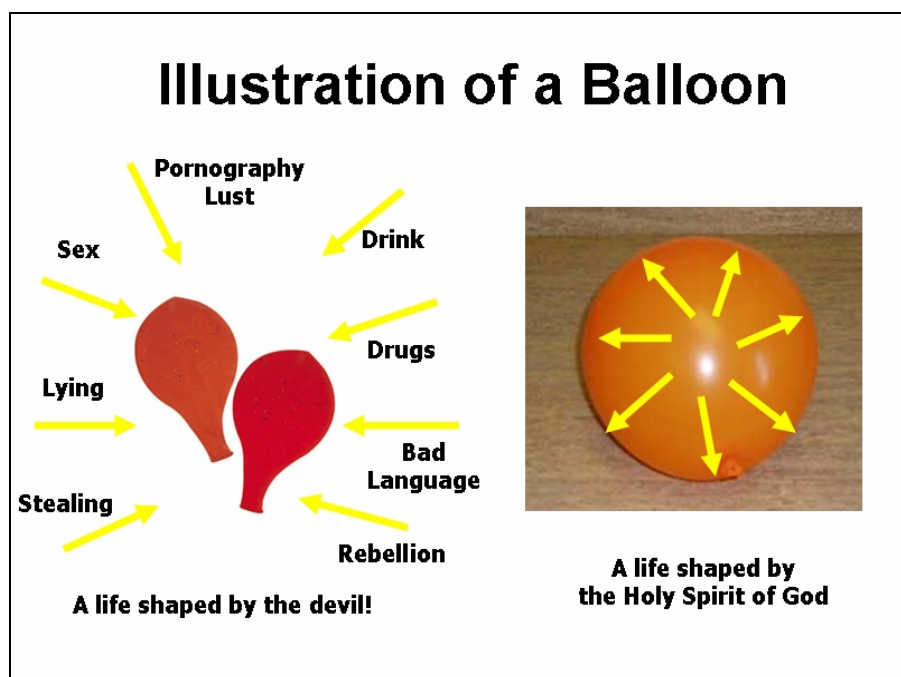


I. Introduction (Philp 4:8)

- A. Christianity begins with **faith/confidence in Jesus Christ**, but it doesn't end there
- B. Everyone who comes to Christ, comes as a wicked, condemned, lost sinner, with the desperate need to find forgiveness, and the ability to live free from the enslaving power of sin
- C. The next step after salvation, is the need to build up some strength against sin – takes hard work (diligence) – not going to be easy!
- D. Christianity is not a life lived secluded behind walls, but a life lived free from constant defeat, by building walls between you and some definite enemies
- E. A Christian's faith is directed towards God
- F. A Christian's virtue is directed towards sin and temptation
- G. We are commanded to meditate on virtuous things (Philp 4:8)
- H. Let's find out what those kind of things are

II. What is Virtue?

- A. It is an old word – not used much today – too old fashioned I guess!
- B. It is very rare word (Pr 31:10). Not many people have virtue
- C. Definition
 - 1. “Wisdom is knowing what to do next, skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it.” David Starr Jordan
 - 2. Virtue simply is doing things God's way (Ps 18:30) because it is the perfect way to do things.
 - 3. Virtue is a strength - a supernatural ability to say “no” to temptations and “yes” to right and good things - the ability to walk away from temptation (Philp 4:13) –it takes a lot of inner strength to do that because temptation usually is attractive and fun and enjoyable (see James 1:14,15)
 - 4. Illustration of a Balloon:
 - a. Without virtue, a Christian becomes just like the world around it – is fashioned by the pressures around him – like a flat balloon
 - b. With virtue, a Christian takes on a new shape that is formed by a pressure on the INSIDE – the filling of the Holy Spirit of God



5. The other word for virtue is FORTITUDE
 - a. With men, it is being MANLY, and strong, and not a push-over but full of back-bone and resilience, and grit and stamina
 - b. With women it is being FENMINE, and strong in their femininity and conviction and discretion
- D. The opposite of Virtue is Vice
 1. Virtues are what is RIGHT with a man
 2. Vices are what is WRONG with him
 3. Same is true with women
 4. Vices are crimes, sins, wickedness
 5. The ability to NOT be dominated by worldliness (vices) is a virtue – a strength – a power that is more powerful than a nuclear bomb
- E. We all draw lines at how far we will go in our day to day decisions, and what we will do and won't do – it is vital that we draw lines where the Bible says to, and NOT where our friends say to, or even where our heart tells us to
- F. It is the **first** thing a Christian is to add to their life as soon as they get saved!
- G. Too many believers get some faith, and then STOP right there! It is like learning ABC, and not going on and learning the rest of the alphabet, and learning how to read, and write, etc
- H. Let me say this - Virtue is not an imposed morality – it is something that a Christian holds to personally, and by their OWN choice because of what God has told them in the Bible!

III. Examples of Virtue

- A. Job 31:1; Psalm 101:3 – controlling your eyes
- B. Ruth 3:11 – Resisted the temptation to just marry anyone – she waited
- C. Jesus – a life full of virtue (inner strength)
- D. Pr 12:4 – builds up her husband instead of making him ashamed
- E. David was a MAN'S MAN (1Sam 13:14)
- F. Abigail was a STRONG woman (1Sam 25:21-35)

IV. A Great Example of Virtue and Vice – David and Uriah (2Sam 11)

- A. **Background** (11:1-5)
 1. David's Boredom – had nothing to do –went out LOOKING for something that was exciting (and Satan provided something “exciting”)
 2. David's Bedroom – sees a woman bathing on her rooftop, and David STAYS watching her. Sends flowers and a card inviting her over for dinner and a movie – it quickly moves into the bedroom, and both David and Bathsheba broke their marriage vows that evening
 3. David's Belief – that no one would know – it was a ONCE OFF event
 4. David's Burden – little problem shows up (11:5) – no contraceptives, no RU-486 abortion pill, no abortion clinics – there is a baby coming, and people will ask questions!
- B. **David's Plan** (11:6-13)
 1. Counted on Uriah just being like every other man
 2. But Uriah was NOT like most other men
 - a. Most would have jumped at the chance to escape a fight and duty
 - b. Most men would have LOVED to be at ease and at home and in comfort while others risked their lives
 3. Uriah had character
 - a. Had convictions – wouldn't ignore his responsibilities to his fellow soldiers – wouldn't take advantage of his freedom from the fight
 - b. He openly said what DAVID should have said (11:11)
- C. **David's Ruin** (11:14-17, 26-27)
 1. Decides to murder Uriah to hide his sin
 2. Uses his general, Joab to carry out his deed
 3. Decides he can carry on like nothing ever happened – his little sin would never mean anything, and he could just get on with his life!
 4. But God judges David

- a. With Absalom turning against him
 - b. By killing his newborn son
 - c. And causing David to lose his kingdom for a while
- D. **Uriah's Praise by God** – one of God's great men in the Bible!
- E. These two men:
- 1. One had character (Uriah) – was a REAL man that will for all eternity be honoured in heaven as a real man of honour and character
 - 2. And one was without character/virtue (David) – he was a coward, and a wimp, and a weasel, and a sissy, and a loser!
- F. Which one was MORE of a man? Which one had GREATER strength? Which one withstood pressure, and lived by principle and conviction? And which one lived by opportunity and by stealth?

V. What is a Christian Without Virtue?

- A. **In Bondage** – to the haunts of the past and of guilt from sins
- B. **In Fear** – of what will happen if when they get caught
- C. **In Danger** – of ruin and defeat – there already is enough enemies, and troubles against a Christian to be bringing MORE upon your own head
- D. The key to protection from Satan, and blessing from God is living a life of inner strength and virtue instead of muscles and beauty and caving into the pressures of sin, the world, and the devil!

VI. How to Improve Your Virtue

- A. **Loathe** (hate) the vices, the sins in you – the quickness by which you give into temptation and pressure from friends and the world
 - 1. Choose the good, and hate the evil in your life and in this world (Ps 97:10; Pr 8:13) – on a day-by-day basis
 - 2. Do things Christ's way, by faith, trusting that He will work everything out for your good
 - 3. Live by virtue, by the strength of the Holy Spirit in your life
- B. **Get Lively** – get a life project that takes up your time – your family, your job, a ministry in the church, a big house project, a college course, a degree!
- C. **Learn** the lives of the people in the Bible – they are real people, with real problems, whom God has recorded to show us REAL solutions
 - 1. If you won't take the time to study your Bible, then you are wasting your time as a Christian
 - 2. You will not move on and grow strong, unless against temptation you learn how to endure long
- D. **Constantly add** virtue to your way of thinking, loving, living
 - 1. It is not a one time GOODNESS act that you do
 - 2. But a constant development of your ability to live right and godly – walking the straight (hard) and narrow way of a Christian!
- E. **Love** God's laws – thank God for rules, and limits on your life – keeps you OUT of the deadly traps (snares) of the devil
- F. **Look** always for a way of escape when facing any temptation (1Cor 10:13)
 - 1. There always is one – God makes sure of it
 - 2. Pray and ask for a way through, and to make it apparent
 - 3. Then, DON'T DEBATE – just act against the temptation as Joseph did when Potiphar's wife tempted him – RUN!

VII. Conclusion

- A. Everyone who comes to Christ, comes as a wicked, condemned, lost sinner, with the desperate need to find forgiveness, and the ability to live free from the enslaving power of sin – that's what it means to be saved!
- B. The FIRST thing a Christian is to add to their life as soon as they get saved is virtue - build up some walls between you and sin
- C. Too many believers get some faith, and then STOP right there!
- D. David Starr Jordan profoundly said, "Wisdom is knowing what to do next, skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it."

- E. Do you have that ability – to do what is right and good when all the world around you is sinning against the Lord?
- F. Virtue is the ability to walk away from temptation –it takes a lot of inner strength to do that because temptation usually is attractive, fun and enjoyable
- G. King David is a good example of lack of virtue – wasn't man enough to turn away, and wasn't man enough to accept responsibility for his sin
- H. We all need to add a lot of virtue to our lives before we watch another TV show, turn on the radio, or sit down with our schoolmates and friends

Knowledge

Personally Knowing Something To Be True, Not Just Accepting It As True

“and to virtue knowledge”

Philippians 3:10



I. Introduction (1Peter 2:1,2)

- A. Faith gets us into God’s family, and forms the foundation that our life can rest upon
- B. Virtue keeps us from getting trapped and defeated by sin like it used to
- C. Next comes KNOWLEDGE that needs to be added to our spiritual diet
 1. Why must a Christian pick this Book up and read it from cover to cover?
 2. Why come to a church that teaches through the contents of this Bible Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening?
 3. Why go through Discipleship? Two years of discipleship!
 4. Because there is a spiritual instinct, a spiritual need in every human being to feed on TRUTH – knowing it, and learning it, and believing it, and living on it – instead of living on fairy tales and on theories and on opinions, and on philosophies!
- D. The purpose of growing in my own personal knowledge is so that I have some answers for the problems I go through, and answers for the uncertainties in those troubles – in other words, if I could just KNOW some things, the devil will not be able to easily scare me anymore! Examples:
 1. Car acting up – just dying, right on the road in traffic – scary. But then when I know that it is an idle problem, then I can adjust my driving and just keep it above the idle and get it home – confidence
 2. Health scare – scary when you feel like you are in danger. Only to find out it is the flu, and you are just weak, and will get better in a week – then you can endure without the fear!

II. Knowledge is More than Information and Education

- A. Knowledge alone is wrong
 1. Information and education fill your mind with facts, names, places, events, statistics – all but with no meaning – no relationship with your life and purpose
 2. Knowledge alone kills – is dead – just promotes pride (1Cor 8:1)
 3. Martin Luther said “Education without salvation equals damnation”
- B. God’s Knowledge is what we need
 1. Knowledge is a confidence, a calm assurance in what I KNOW to be true and real, in spite of how I or anyone else feels!
 2. Knowledge is an intimacy with some things (knowing something through and through – not just skimming, or superficially)
 - a. Like knowing God – I KNOW God, and I want to KNOW Him better and deeper (2Tim 1:12; Philp 3:10)
 - b. Like knowing the Bible – I know some of the truths in this Book, but I so want to know the depths of the riches of the knowledge in this Book (Rom 11:33)
 - c. Like knowing my wife (1Pet 3:7), and the wife with her husband
 - d. Like knowing my Job – supposed to learn it better and better, and read up on how to do it better, and improve my performance – that’s how you get raises and promotions folks!!!
 3. Knowledge is something that is Proven to be True – you must be able to prove something that you know, or else it is just a guess, or a feeling. If you know something, CAN YOU PROVE IT?
- C. Grow in Knowledge (2Peter 3:18) – don’t ever stagnate!
 1. All the days of our lives as Christians we are to be increasing in our knowledge of the things of God. It is not enough that we should coast along on the little knowledge we have at our conversion to Christ. We have to have some knowledge in order to be saved. No one is converted to Christ without any knowledge at all. What we know when we are first converted is like the ABC; it is not the whole alphabet.
 - a. Start off with milk – only able to digest simple truths like a baby
 - b. Then, slowly you add meat and potatoes
 - c. Add some salt

- d. Then, top it off with some honey from time to time – good stuff, encouraging stuff, uplifting stuff
- 2. So, the appeal of Peter (2Pet 1:5) here is to be always at our Bible. Always, either reading it or, when we have a moment to spare, thinking about what it says, meditating upon what it says, reflecting on what it means. Even when we are resting, our minds should be trained to go back to the words of this Book and its teaching, its truths and think about how they relate to your life right then and there
- 3. The appeal is for us to be getting to know more and more of our Lord, and His will – but always through personal, first hand knowledge through the Scriptures – not through other people’s knowledge, not through their thinking, or their interpretations – your own!
- 4. The appeal is the same as for us to be getting to know more and more of our wives and our husbands, our kids, and our daily tasks

III. Things a Christian Can and Should Firmly KNOW inside and out

- A. That God keeps His promises (Rom 4:17-21)
- B. Your eternal destiny (Job 19:25; Jn 5:24)
- C. That you are different because of Jesus Christ (Jn 9:25; 2Cor 5:17)
- D. The will of God for your life (Rom 12:1,2) – your purpose and calling
- E. That you reap what you sow (Gal 6:7)
- F. What is clearly right and clearly wrong – convictions (Amos 5:15)
- G. That people are wicked and in need of God and His word (Dt 31:29; Acts 20:29,32; Rom 7:18)
- H. That troubles are ultimately God’s business (Ps 119:75)
- I. The Joy of the Lord (Neh 8:10) – don’t just act like you believe it’s there – KNOW it, experience it, LIVE in it, and show it
- J. The Fear of the Lord (Prov 1:7) – you had better know this inside and out – don’t ignore
- K. Some things will be hard to understand (2Pet 3:15,16) – this is why:
 - 1. Some things are meat, so are meant to be chewed, not just swallowed – very painful, and not easily digested that way – so that means, you have got to study your Bible
 - a. Read the context
 - b. Ask the questions
 - c. Look up cross-references – many Bibles have them listed
 - 2. Some things must be experienced yourself before they are understood
 - a. Like tithing – you will not ever know the blessings of giving no matter how much you read about it, until you just start giving!
 - b. Like patience – have to go through trials to appreciate grace and patience and rewards for endurance
 - 3. Some things are meant for others
 - a. Lambs and temple and Jerusalem and priesthood – belong to the Jews, not to Christians
 - b. Reading Matthew 24 and it says what to do when the antichrist comes – meant for the Jews in Israel
 - 4. Some things may never be fully understood (1Cor 13:12)

IV. What is a Christian’s Life without a Growing Amount of Biblical Knowledge?

- A. Dead, dry, empty and worthless – why?
 - 1. Because all the information of the world won’t help your soul
 - 2. You need to get to know things inside and out
 - 3. More than just memorising letters on a page, facts, figures, names – who cares?! Real Knowledge is learning the WHY’S of the facts, and the MORALS of the events of history!
- B. Simple knowledge is like a boring relationship – nothing more to talk about, discover, explore – life should not be that way!
 - 1. Marriage – always be a little intriguing, always exploring (1Pet 3:7)
 - 2. Bible – go on a treasure hunt – deeper still deeper
 - 3. Prayer – see how much grace you can tap into (James 5:16)

V. How to Grow in Knowledge

- A. Grow in grace first (2Pet 3:18)
- B. Study out what you believe for yourself
 - 1. Personal devotions and Bible Study at home

- a. Bring Bible Study tools
 - b. Examples of a search and learning time
 - c. Use a notebook!
2. Church meetings – learning all the time
 3. Discipleship lessons
 4. Bible Institute
- C. Teach others – get answers for them – then you will grow
1. The purpose of being discipled, is to learn for sure, but you will REALLY learn when you take the lessons that you learned under Paul, or under myself, or under Tony, and turn around and teach someone else, yourself!
 2. There is no better way to learn than to be forced to learn so that you have answers for someone else – Sunday School teacher (Bro Kevin, have you learned through teaching? Of course!)
 3. Moms – teach your kids at home
 4. Dads – teach your kids
 5. Teens – get involved and help out with Sunday School and Creche, and Bible Clubs, and teach a bit – and YOU WILL LEARN!
- D. Test what you think you know – adjust as you discover new truths, and always bring what you know in line with what God says (EX: Christopher Columbus and the circle of the earth)
- E. Keep your knowledge practical (Heb 13:9; 1Cor 8:1) and balanced with love

VI. Conclusion

- A. In simple terms, we are to be adding knowledge of the Bible constantly to our minds and hearts. This is the very life of our life: the very soul of our faith - the Word of God. If you and I intend to be diligent Christians, able to stand against the wiles of the devil, there is no other formula on earth,
1. We must have the shield of faith, yes!
 2. And the breastplate of righteousness - virtue
 3. AND the knowledge of the Word of God, which is a sharp two-edged sword against all attacks.
- B. Therefore, Peter tells us we must add knowledge; and that is why we have to read the best books.
1. There are a million books that we will never read; even good books that we will never be able, in our lifetime, to read. I love good books, and have some books in my study that I will never read. I wish I had time to read them all, but there isn't time. Time is rushing us on with so many duties, night and day.
 2. But, there is one book that we dare not be ignorant about - the Word of God. We must read it from Genesis to Revelation over, and over, and over again. Not simply that we might have a superficial knowledge of it, as a person may scan over a newspaper and pick out a bit here and a bit there. No, we must know its very language, its ready application; its very tone and spirit must be ours.
- C. In two weeks (after resurrection Sunday, we will return to the next step to take, the next characteristic to add to our lives - Temperance

Temperance – Part 1

Surrendering Your ‘Self’ to God’s Will and your Attitude to God’s Holy Spirit

“And to knowledge temperance”

Acts 24:25

I. Introduction to Part One

- A. Faith (trust in the abilities of Jesus Christ) gets us into God’s family, and forms the foundation upon all the rest of our life
- B. Virtue keeps us from getting trapped and defeated by sin by giving us the limits that we are to live within – lines that we will never cross (porn, divorce, murder, etc)
- C. Knowledge gives me answers for the problems I go through, and for the uncertainties in those troubles – in other words, if I could just KNOW some things, the devil cannot scare me!
- D. But knowledge is not enough for this sinful flesh of mine – I not only need to know what I am doing wrong, and how to do right, but I need help in controlling myself when I still want to do wrong! That’s where **temperance** comes in!
- E. According to Acts 24:25, the apostle Paul not only preached about righteousness, and sin, but of the inability of a person to control themselves when it comes to sin, and therefore their need for a new Master!
- F. When it comes to a Christian’s life, Temperance is three things:
 1. **Dominion** – Who is in Charge of my life?
 2. **Balance** – Keeping things balanced
 3. **Grace** – Handling Failures
- G. Together, those three ingredients enable a believer to surrender my ‘Self’ to God’s Will and their Attitude to God’s Holy Spirit



II. The Opposites of Temperance

- A. Out of Control
- B. Undisciplined
- C. Unruly
- D. Unrestrained
- E. Chaotic
- F. Lawless
- G. HELLO? That’s our society!

III. Dominion - Temperance is More Than Self Control (2Tim 2:24-26)

- A. Majority of all people are SLAVES!
 1. To their habits – think, do, and feel the way they have since childhood – can’t do any differently
 2. To their peers – never stand on their own
 3. To satanic pressures – fears, worries, inhibitions
- B. Self-Control is good... but it’s not the best! (**Prov 16:32**)
 1. Great men are under control (disciplined)!
 2. But Self is flawed by sinful nature... will let you down
 3. Otherwise Adam and Eve would have obeyed
- C. Temperance is Placing Yourself under a Stronger Master than Yourself (Luke 11:21,22)... and living by His commands, and in His fear
- D. Temperance in the Bible means to be 'under-control', 'restrained'. It was applied years ago to the use of alcohol (Temperance Societies), but it means that we are to grow in general restraint, because the more you know yourself, the more you realise your need of limits.
 1. Oh, how dangerous you and I are. Our hearts are desperately wicked
 2. How quickly our moods can swing.
 3. How quickly our temper can flare.
 4. How quickly irritability manifests itself.
 5. How tempting we are to act on impulse instead of soberly.
 6. In next to no time we can be swept up in a train of thought that becomes very dangerous, leading to wrath, and revenge and even murder.

- E. The new birth (Biblical salvation) transfers my sinfulness to Jesus Christ, and receives forgiveness in its place – but that is not all
 - 1. A Christian also receives new orders
 - 2. A new boss
 - 3. A new Master (Jn 13:13; Acts 9:6)
 - 4. Every time someone got saved in the Bible, they submitted their lives to the dominion (control) of the Lord Jesus (Lk 23:42; Rom 10:9,10) – it was not a “free-for-all”!
 - 5. If you only got your sins forgiven, but not your will submitted, then you are out-of-balance, and will never have joy
- F. The reason why there is SO MUCH defeat in Christian homes and Christian hearts is because we may belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, but He is not allowed to be in Charge of our lives – the enemy still directs our steps, and lures us along, and traps us in his snares!
- G. **Temperance is Yielding to the Right Authority (Rom 6:11-18; Philp 3:8)**
 - 1. What do we normally give-in to? Habits, lusts, pressures – what we are used to giving in to
 - 2. As a Christian, there is a need for “reckoning” – adding things up, and weighing them out to see which is better
 - 3. Reckon ...

Become Unresponsive (Dead) to	Live for the thrill of...
Sin – what you know to be wrong	God (Creator of this universe)
World – anything that is not of Christ (like Drink, Drugs, Sex before marriage)	Righteousness
Flesh – self-serving interests	Grace
Lusts – pleasure first	Heaven (Col 3)
Bad habits – what you do naturally like	Soul-Winning
Laziness	Family
Bitterness and habitual anger	Pleasing God – “Well done...”
DUNG (Philp 3:8)	Making a difference (i.e., Doctor)
	Saving our generation
	PRICELESS

- a. Dead to this world – it offers us nothing compared to Christ, and owes us nothing
- b. Alive to Christ
- c. It all is an either/or situation – can’t live in both worlds
- 4. Don’t let sin dominate any more – don’t obey IT anymore
- 5. Don’t yield or give-in to its deceptive pull
- 6. Yield instead to a better ruler over your life – Jesus Christ
- 7. Principles:
 - a. There are TWO KINGS who seek to rule your life
 - 1) One is Satan – disguised as SELF and rebellion
 - 2) The other is Jesus – meek and lowly
 - b. You are a servant of one or the other – no middle ground
 - c. You are the servant to that which you obey
 - 1) The Pillow
 - 2) The Euro
 - 3) The fear of failures
 - 4) The fear of man
- 8. No Christian is to be under the dominion of any sin – no sin should have any controlling influence over your life – period (Rom 6:14)
- H. The moment you got saved, you became the servant of righteousness – stay there, and serve THAT King!

IV. Conclusion to Part 1

- A. How Temperate/disciplined are you?
 - 1. Thoughts under or out of control?
 - 2. Attitudes?
 - 3. Daily Routines?

4. Walk with God?
 - B. Self-Control Won't Be Enough... must yield to a Greater Master
 - C. Reckon some things worthless, and some things priceless
 - D. Next week... Part 2 – Balance in the Christian Life

Temperance – Part 2

Surrendering Your ‘Self’ to God’s Will and your Attitude to God’s Holy Spirit

“And to knowledge temperance”

Acts 24:25

I. Introduction to Part Two

- A. **Faith** (trust in the abilities of Jesus Christ) gets us into God’s family, and forms the foundation upon all the rest of our life
- B. **Virtue** keeps us from getting trapped and defeated by sin by giving us the limits that we are to live within – lines that we will never cross (porn, divorce, murder, etc)
- C. **Knowledge** gives me answers for the problems I go through, and for the uncertainties in those troubles – in other words, if I could just KNOW some things, the devil cannot scare me!
- D. But knowledge is not enough for this sinful flesh of mine – I not only need to know what I am doing wrong, and how to do right, but I need help in controlling myself when I still want to do wrong! That’s where **temperance** comes in!
- E. According to Acts 24:25, the apostle Paul not only preached about righteousness, and judgment of sin, but of “temperance” - the inability of a person to control themselves when it comes to sin, and therefore their need for a new Master!
- F. When it comes to a Christian’s life, Temperance is three things:
 1. **Control** – Who is in Charge of my life?
 2. **Balance** – Keeping things balanced
 3. **Grace** – Handling Failures
- G. Together, those three ingredients enable a believer to surrender my ‘Self’ to God’s Will and their Attitude to God’s Holy Spirit
- H. It makes a person *Truly Free* – not to do as you please (in bondage to sin again), but to be as God designed you to be!

II. Last Week We Learned

- A. **The Opposites of Temperance:** Out of Control; Undisciplined; Unruly; Unrestrained; Chaotic; Lawless; HELLO? That’s our society!
- B. **Temperance is Restraint, But is More Than Self Restraint** (2Tim 2:24-26)
 1. Majority of all people are SLAVES! To habits, Peers, Satanic Pressures
 2. Self-Control is good... but it’s not the best! (**Prov 16:32**)
 3. Temperance is Placing Yourself under a Stronger Master than Yourself (Luke 11:21,22)... and living by His commands, and in His fear
 4. Temperance in the Bible means to be 'under-control', 'restrained'. It was applied years ago to the use of alcohol (Temperance Societies), but it means that we are to grow in general restraint, because the more you know yourself, the more you realise your need of limits.
 5. The new birth (Biblical salvation) transfers my sinfulness to Jesus Christ, and receives forgiveness in its place – but that is not all
 6. Every time someone got saved in the Bible, they submitted their lives to the dominion (control) of the Lord Jesus (Lk 23:42; Rom 10:9,10) – it was not a “free-for-all”!
 7. If you only got your sins forgiven, but not your will submitted, then you are out-of-balance, and will never have joy
- C. The reason why there is SO MUCH defeat in Christian homes and Christian hearts is because we may belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, but He is not allowed to be in Charge of our lives – the enemy still directs our steps, and lures us along, and traps us in his snares!
- D. **Temperance is Yielding to the Right Authority (Rom 6:11-18)**
 1. What do we normally give-in to? Habits, lusts, pressures – we yield to what we are used to giving in to
 2. As a Christian, there is a need for “reckoning” – adding things up, and weighing them out to see which is better

3. Reckon some things *to be Dung*... and some things *to be Priceless*

Become Unresponsive (Dead) to	Live for the thrill of...
Sin – what you know to be wrong	God (Creator of this universe)
World – anything that is not of Christ (like Drink, Drugs, Sex before marriage)	Righteousness
Flesh – self-serving interests	Grace
Lusts – pleasure first	Heaven (Col 3)
Bad habits – what you do naturally like Laziness	Soul-Winning
Bitterness and habitual anger	Family
	Pleasing God – “Well done...”
	Making a difference (i.e., Doctor)
	Saving our generation

4. Principles:

- a. There are TWO KINGS who seek to rule your life
 - 1) One is Satan – disguised as SELF and rebellion
 - 2) The other is Jesus – meek and lowly
- b. You are a servant of one or the other – no middle ground
- c. You are the servant to that which you obey

5. No Christian is to be under the dominion of any sin – no sin should have any controlling influence over your life – period (Rom 6:14)

- E. The moment you got saved, **you became the servant of righteousness** – stay there, and serve THAT King!

III. Today we want to focus on the First of the Remaining Two Thoughts About Temperance

- A. Balance
- B. Grace

IV. Balance in the Christian Life (1Cor 9:24-27)

- A. Most of us are imbalanced in major areas of our lives (Hosea 7:8) – undisciplined – unable to know when enough is enough, or to say no to something we know we should not do
 - 1. Like a pancake, that has been cooking a while, and not been turned
 - 2. So we too are burnt on one side, and raw on the other - imbalanced
 - 3. We become no good to anyone
- B. But a Christian is supposed to be a unique kind of a person – a truly balanced person – “fulfilled”
 - 1. To the world, we look very extreme (Church on Sundays, no discos, no pub-crawling, no smoking, no porn, dedicated time reading our Bibles every day, praying about everything) - to the world, we look boring
 - 2. But what we do, and what we believe from the Bible **actually puts balance into our lives**, and fulfils our lives like no disco or drug ever could
- C. The Real Prize (1Cor 9:24; Philp 3:13,14; Heb 12:1,2)
 - 1. An Eternal Prize – lasts forever – not like the things we accumulate in this life (rusts, falls apart, breaks down)
 - 2. A priceless prize – up to five crowns can be earned
 - 3. Worth everything you may have to go through
- D. Striving for the Mastery (1Cor 9:25)
 - 1. Of a Skill (piano playing) – not just play it, but master it!
 - 2. Of a Sport (Soccer kicking)
 - 3. Of a Subject (Maths, Science, Drawing)
 - 4. Today’s world is only interested in mastering SIN – getting good at lying, and stealing, and cheating, and fornicating!
 - 5. The Christian has a greater desire – that is for the mastery of SELF
- E. God wants us Temperate in all areas of our life – all areas
 - 1. Our Time (Eph 5:15,16)
 - 2. Our Thoughts (Philp 4:8)

3. Our Attitudes (Philp 3:13,14)
 4. Our Money – not selfish, but giving, and saving and using for God’s glory
 5. Our Actions – for the Lord first, then for other, and lastly for self – that’s the right balance
- F. Keeping under my body (1Cor 9:26,27)
1. There are Priority Balancing Measures every Christian needs to put in action
 2. To bring it into subjection – bring it back into balance
 3. These are things a Christian must do certainly – specifically – not stabs in the dark, but targets and goals to aim for
 4. We will talk about these at the end

Temperance – Part 3

Surrendering Your ‘Self’ to God’s Will and your Attitude to God’s Holy Spirit

“And to knowledge temperance”

Acts 24:25

I. Introduction to Part Three

- A. According to Acts 24:25, the apostle Paul not only preached about righteousness, and judgment of sin, but of “temperance” - the inability of a person to control themselves when it comes to sin, and therefore their need for a new Master! A whole new birth!
- B. When it comes to a Christian’s life, Temperance is three things:
 1. **Control** – Who is in Charge of my life?
 2. **Balance** – Keeping things balanced
 3. **Grace** – Handling Failures
- C. Together, those three ingredients enable a believer to surrender my ‘Self’ to God’s Will and their Attitude to God’s Holy Spirit
- D. It makes a person Truly Free – not to do as you please (in bondage to sin again), but to be as God designed you to be!

II. Bringing Life BACK Into Balance

- A. Most of us are out of balance – intemperate (Hosea 7:8)
- B. Example of Temperate versus Intemperate People (John 18:2-8; 19)
 1. Extreme measures to capture Jesus – mobilizing a small army, sneaking up, tying Him up, dragging Him to 7 mock trials, trying to scare and demoralize Him and His disciples
 2. Peter over-reacts – tries to cut the head off of the nearest man
 3. Jesus calmly responds to the crowd – under control – could have wiped them all out (18:6)
 4. Before the High Priest, Jesus again calmly responds even though slapped and beaten
 5. Before Pilate, before Herod – totally under control
 6. WHOSE CONTROL WERE THESE OTHER PEOPLE UNDER?
- C. The need that every Christian has, once they have placed their FAITH in Jesus Christ, and started to live by Virtue instead of Vice, and begin to grow in their own person Knowledge of the Bible and of the Author of the Bible, is to get under control, and get Balance in their lives
- D. Imbalanced Lives
 1. 40-50 hours a week working – less than 15 minutes a day with the kids
 2. 56 hours sleeping – less than 2 hours worshipping God on a Sunday
 3. 25 – 30 hours a week watching TV – less than 2 hours reading the Bible in a week
 4. First few years of marriage in love, passionately in love – last 30 years, bitter and angry
 5. By 18 years of age, most kids will have watched 200,000 acts of violence on TV – while only showing kindness to others on rare occasions!
 6. €100 a week spent on newspapers, sweets, Cokes, videos, magazines, toys, CD’s – less than €5 a week for Missions!
 7. 120 hours a week immobile, in a chair, in bed, on a couch – less than 5 hours a week in motion – actually moving from place to place
 8. I think we are imbalanced
- E. Moses was burning out because of imbalance/intemperance (Ex 18:18)
- F. The entire Church at Ephesus was imbalanced (Rev 2:1-5)
- G. Big Ways to bring Balance into Your Life
 1. **Bless the Lord** – worship Him (Ps 145:2; 34:1) – worship Him constantly, naturally, spiritually
 2. **Laugh a lot** (Pr 15:13,15; 17:22) – not at evil, or at sin, but at yourself, and at things that bring joy – most only make fun of sin (Pr 14:9). Joke book, light-hearted stories. Requires you to have to forget some things in the past, so that you can just laugh and hope for the future!
 3. **Be quiet and meditate every day** (Gen 24:63; Ps 46:10; 143:5)
 4. **Work hard** – it is unhealthy to do things half-heartedly (Eccl 9:10) – working people live longer and enjoy life more!



5. **Bless your family** – everything you do needs to be as a blessing, a help – everything else is tearing it apart – the least you can do is bless it and love it (Pr 14:1)
 6. **Witness to someone every day** – you will cool off otherwise
 7. **Schedule God into your life** (Ps 55:17; Heb 10:25) – at least 10 percent – not only the tithe, but time and talent – be in the Bible, and in Church A LOT! Not just a bit!
- H. Folks, the illustration is of a tug-o-war
1. The pull by this world, and by the flesh, and by the devil is incredible
 2. It is tearing everything that is good apart – health, sanity, family, schedules, hearts, etc
 3. We ALL need to start to put up a good old fashioned fight for balance
 - a. Won't be able to get rid of stress - but we will be able to counterbalance it with God's peace and confidence
 - b. Won't be able to get rid of the past – but will be able to overwhelm its pain and scars with better things

III. Final Point - Having Grace (Heb 11:28)

- A. What about failures in our lives?
- B. Temperance means that you do not ever give up on either yourself, or on others – ever!
- C. Temperance means that you know you are but dust (Ps 103:14) – we know everyone else is worthless, but rarely do we admit WE are dust!
- D. And that even at our best (so full of accomplishment and achievement and success), we are still nothing (Ps 39:5)
- E. That's why God gives MORE grace, and then some more, and then still more (James 4:6) – to make up for all our failures
- F. So
 1. Have Grace – give people lots of second chances – and third and fourth - both to yourselves, and to each other
 2. Seek grace in your life – be soft about failures - and be soft in seeking forgiveness for failures – pray a lot about your failures, and talk to someone that you know will help you with grace instead of judgment
- G. A temperate Christian is not a harsh, or angry, or bitter person at all! They fail, and are forgiven, and rise up again (Pr 24:16)

IV. Conclusion - Improving Your Temperance – Developing It

- A. **Prioritize** – Decide What's Really Important to Do (from God's perspective), and then keep Doing THAT
 1. Nature (the world) will pull you in ONE direction only (downward)
 2. You have to decide out what is really important, and keep the balance
 3. What has God Given You to protect?
 - a. Your health
 - b. Your home – wife and children, and extended family
 - c. Your testimony
 - d. Your church
 - e. Your relationship with Jesus
 - f. Your sanity
 4. Bring all of those areas under subjection – bring them back into balance by...
 - a. Loving God totally will balance my home (Mt 22:21; Cf Eph 5:25)
 - b. Serving God pre-eminently will balance my motives (Col 3:23) – I do everything no longer just for people, but for the Lord Jesus
 - c. Obeying God sweetly will balance my heart (Ps 40:8) – keep me from complaining because I trust the Lord to make everything I do, every sacrifice I make, worth it all!
 - d. Knowing and doing God's will, will keep my life from floundering and falling down constantly (2Peter 1:8,10)
 5. How do I do those things? Areas in My Life to Focus On Balancing
 - a. Both Hearing AND Doing (James 1:22) – not just coming to Church, but obeying what I hear from the Bible
 - b. Both Faith and works (James 2:17) – not just believing God, but living like He is being Good to you

- c. Both Bible Study and Soul-Winning – so many of you are so out of balance in this area
 - d. Both Work AND Worship – too many use work to excuse missing church, and have no personal worship time at home!!!
 - e. Have Convictions AND Grace – rock solid beliefs about what is right and wrong, and yet lots of grace for when others fall, or especially when you fall!
- B. Pray About Everything** – don't rush, and live by knee-jerk actions
- C. Pursue lots of guidance** – listen to wisdom - because of blind-spots
- D. Practice (Live by) the 80/20 rule**
- 1. Work Hard, and Play Hard – but MORE Work than Play
 - 2. Work 6 days... Play one day – rest
 - 3. All work, and no play burns you out - shame
 - 4. All play and no work wimps you out - shame
 - 5. Make time every day to worship, and just love the Lord – devotion

Patience

The Ability To Go Through Trials And Troubles Without Complaining

“and to temperance patience”

Hebrews 10:36



I. Introduction

- A. Faith gets us into God’s family, and forms the foundation upon all the rest of our life
- B. Virtue keeps us from getting trapped and defeated by sin by having limits to how we now will live
- C. Knowledge gives me answers for the problems I go through, and for the uncertainties in those troubles – in other words, if I could just KNOW some things, the devil cannot scare me and easily defeat me!
- D. Adding temperance brings me under God’s control when I want to do wrong!
- E. But I still need something more – and it is patience, because this old flesh does not yield fast enough, and this brain does learn fast enough, and this heart doesn’t yield far enough, and prayers don’t get answered fast enough
- F. Patience – not frustration is what I will direct towards each and every one of my troubles and trials, and I will find strength in waiting on the Lord

II. What is Biblical Patience? (Pr 13:12) What does the Bible teach about patience?

- A. Patience – It is a hard word to live!
- B. We easily understand its meaning – in simple words, it means waiting, and not getting upset while we are waiting! That’s patience!
- C. The opposites of patience are: **haste, stress, worry, anxiety**
- D. Signs of impatience include: **irritability, on edge, stressed-out, frustration**
- E. Somebody described it this way: *“Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances, or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is always associated with hope.”*
- F. Delay is something that we don't like to endure. When we want something, or expect something, we want it, and we want it now! Actually we wanted it 10 minutes ago! We live in the most impatient generation ever!
 1. How many times has your impatience got you in trouble? Have you ever made a wrong choice because of impatience? Ever jumped into something in a moment of impatience? Bought something you knew you should have prayed about before hand?
 2. As a Christian, we should be patient. Some people seem to have this naturally, most of us don’t. If we Christians have any patience in our lives, it will have to be because of the Holy Spirit. Most of the time, most of us are revving our engines and “stripping our gears” to get going when we ought to be patient, and waiting on clear signals from God.
- G. Here is a Truth - Patience is a result (a fruit) of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives -- Galatians 5:22-23.
 1. The moment you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit began a divine work to produce Christ's character in you. Regardless of who you are, the Spirit works from the same model, Jesus Christ. The Spirit looks to Christ in order to find the blueprint for your character.
 2. The Spirit will immediately begin helping you experience and practice the same love that Jesus had when He laid down His life for His friends.
 3. The same joy He experienced will now fill you.
 4. The identical peace that guarded the heart of Jesus, even as He was being beaten and mocked, will be the peace that the Spirit works to instil in you.
 5. The patience Jesus had for His most unreachable disciple will be the patience that the Spirit now develops in you.
 6. The kindness Jesus showed toward children and sinners will soften your heart toward others.
 7. There will be a goodness about you that is only explainable by the presence of the Spirit of God.
 8. The Spirit will build the same faithfulness into you that led Jesus to be entirely obedient to His Father. T
 9. he Spirit will teach you self-control so that you will have strength to do what is right and to resist temptation.
 10. All of this is as natural as the growth of fruit on a tree. You do not have to orchestrate it on your own. It automatically begins the moment you become a believer.
 11. How quickly it happens depends upon how completely you yield yourself to the Holy Spirit's activity.

III. The Difficulties of Patience

- A. Patience is not in our nature – it is not natural to be patient
- B. Patience must be learned – like a class in Algebra – not easy thing to pick up
- C. Patience is ONLY developed by troubles, and delays, and disappointments – not by just reading a book about it, or hearing a lecture about it
- D. Patience is a humiliating attitude, not a confident attitude – you will look like you don't know what to do – while everyone else is just grabbing a piece of the pie, you are waiting for God's direction in your life, and His blessing

IV. The Work of Patience (James 1:2-4)

- A. **It Perfects us** – Polishes us – is supposed to remove the rough edges
 1. Without patience, love has no foundation – love must **endure** to be true
 2. Without patience, life becomes just a string of disappointments instead of a series of steps to Christ-likeness
 3. Without patience, prayer becomes DEMANDS only instead of requests
 4. Without patience, child-rearing becomes drudgery and depressing – you have to patiently teach them, and love them, and stay on them
 5. Without patience, the Bible becomes long and hard when reading
 6. Without patience in soul-winning, souls to you will become unworthy and deserving of hell in your eyes – “if he doesn't want the Gospel, then he deserves hell!”
- B. **It Proves Us** – proves that we are for real
- C. **It Pleases God** – Paul and Silas were at rest, even though in prison – so they sang and preached and enjoyed the evening (Acts 16) – and bare fruit!

V. The Ways God has Designed Patience to Work on Us (Rom 8:28)

- A. **Through Troubles** (Rom 5:3,4)
 1. Family troubles – deep, hurtful troubles make a better person out of you, if you see PATIENCE at work instead of the devil! AMEN!
 2. Financial troubles – they may completely break you, but usually, that is what you needed – don't get mad at God, and at the world – get another job and WORK, and let PATIENCE reign instead of bitterness
 3. Friend troubles – maybe lost friends, and are alone for a while... let it be for good – let God speak to you, just to you!
 4. Physical troubles – you get upset, but the Lord is most assuredly working on you – you just need to be PATIENT! Be a patient and let God work!
 5. Folly troubles – that's where we get into trouble because of sin in our lives – and we have to learn to patiently re-earn trust, and patiently work through what brought us down, and patiently keep getting up and going on for God
- B. **Through Time** – lots of it (James 5:7; Eccl 3:10)
 1. The older we get, the more we see how MUCH time it took to change us
 2. And now, many of us wish we had so much more time to be changed
 3. Let the Lord take as much time as He thinks necessary like He did with Abraham (25 years)!!!
 4. Without patience you will miss what God has planned for you (Jer 29:11-13) – THAT is the real need of patience – most Christians lose out on what God has in store because they won't patiently wait for God to bring things to pass (Ps 37:5)
- C. **Through constant Testings** (James 1:12)
 1. Like in school – God constantly will be testing to see if you are really growing in your patience, or becoming impatient and bitter and cold!
 2. For most of us, it doesn't take much testing to find out how far we have to go!
 3. God gives us tests to make us BETTER Christians, not BITTER Christians (1 Peter 1:7; Job 23:10)

VI. Examples of Patience AND Impatience

- A. **Job** (James 5:11; Job 1:20-22)
- B. **Abraham** (Heb 6:13-15) – got impatient, yes, but he DID receive the promise of God for a son named Isaac
- C. **Noah** had to be patient for one hundred and twenty years or he would have given-up. Think about it. We don't know if Noah knew how to saw straight or even nail straight when God told him to build that ark. So part of these years may have been learning periods for Noah.

- D. **Joseph** lived many years in slavery and separation from his family. He could have visited them while he was in charge of Egypt but he was where God had placed him and God blessed his patience.
- E. **Jesus** (1Peter 2:23) – perfect patience and rest through everything
- F. **Israel at Mount Sinai** (Ex 32:1) – rushed back into idolatry
- G. **Mary and Martha** gave up on Jesus because He did not rush to come heal their brother, Lazarus (John 11)

VII. Areas that Need Lots of Patience

- A. **Tribulation** – When you are going through the valleys and the battles, and the troubles of life, learn to wait on those troubles to pass (1Peter 2:20,21) – they will pass
- B. **Delays** – When heaven is silent, learn to wait on the Lord (Ps 27:14) and on answers to prayer (Ps 40:1) – He WILL answer
- C. **Injustices** – when things just aren't going right – you need patience, and wisdom to know what to do without being destructive and too aggressive
- D. **Battles** – When you feel like someone/everyone is not interested, wait on them to respond to the Gospel (2Tim 2:24-26), pray for them, and press them again another time
- E. **Giving-up** – when you feel like everything is against you, make sure you just patiently wait on the Lord to Come (2Thes 3:5) – He will not be 1 second late

VIII. How to Add Patience to Your Attitude

- A. **Let God Develop it in you** - Allow God to put you through the hard times
- B. **Learn to pray through the trials** – run your race with patience (Heb 12:1,2)
- C. **Work patiently** (Hebrews 10:36) The only time that “success” ever comes before “work” is in the dictionary.
 - 1. If we are going to build this church, we must do it patiently
 - 2. If you are going to win a soul, you have to do it patiently
 - 3. If you are going to read and study your Bible and learn your Bible, you will only do it patiently
 - 4. If you are going to get victory of sin in your life, you will only do it patiently!
- D. **Thank God for everything** – especially IN the trials (1Thes 5:18)
- E. **Look ahead** (Heb 11:16) – not back, or down
- F. **Desire the Crown** – there is a reward for Christian Patience (James 1:12)

IX. Conclusion

- A. Have you ever felt like God was taking too long – way too long?
- B. The truth is, Yes, He is taking HIS time, but He is working all things out beautifully
- C. Thankfully, there are some serious Rewards for waiting.
 - 1. Waiting for the right marriage partner
 - 2. Waiting for the completion of school – don't rush ahead
 - 3. Waiting for yourself to grow-up – don't get impatient
- D. What does patience do for you?
 - 1. Waiting renews our strength. Don't let stress rob it of you again
 - 2. Waiting prepares us for another race
 - 3. Waiting teaches us to trust God
 - 4. Waiting shows the world you are a strong Christian
- E. God has a plan and purpose in making us wait. Though we may not understand why. It is best not to rush the washing machine. Don't skip any cycles. A Christian song writer said “we'll understand it all by and by!” Another said, “Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand, but I know who holds tomorrow, and I know He holds my hand.”
- F. Have you made you reservation for heaven? Are you sure your ticket is right?
- G. Salvation is not something to be laid-back about – your sins are serious in God's sight, and need to be dealt with before it is eternally too late!

Godliness

Living and Thinking Like Jesus Did

“and to patience godliness”

Titus 2:11,12



I. Introduction (Psalm 12:1)

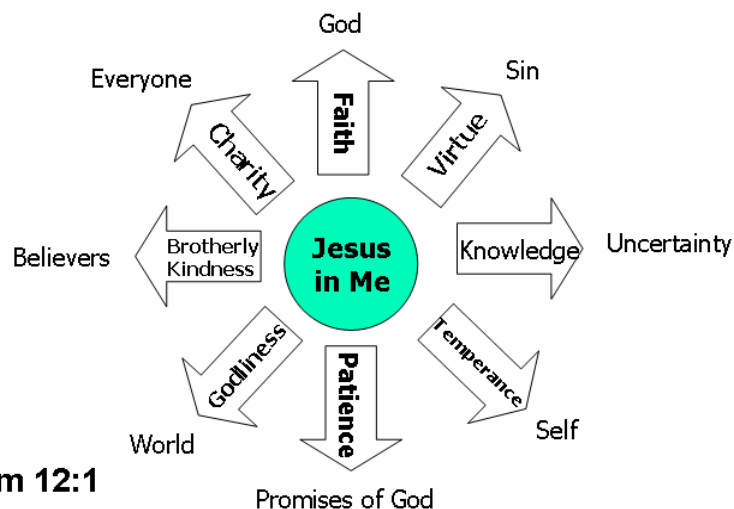
- A. Faith gets us into God’s family, and forms the foundation upon all the rest of our life
- B. Virtue keeps us from getting trapped and defeated by sin
- C. Knowledge gives me answers for the problems I go through, and for the uncertainties in those troubles – in other words, if I could just KNOW some things, the devil cannot scare me!
- D. Temperance helps me control myself when I want to do wrong!
- E. Patience enables me to wait on God as I grow and as I struggle – he has grace with me, I should too!
- F. Next comes godliness, and it is directed towards the world I live in
- G. Review the steps and how they arm us to face our world. Each one of the steps affect different things in our lives – they each have a different affect on different areas of our life
 1. **Faith** is directed towards God and pleases God
 2. **Virtue** is directed towards sin, and helps me resist temptation
 3. **Knowledge** is directed towards my problems and the uncertainty in handling those problems
 4. **Temperance** is directed towards self and bringing it under God’s control
 5. **Patience** is directed towards the promises of God, believing them, and trusting them more than my abilities or lack of them
 6. **Godliness** is directed towards the world – shows the world how to REALLY live
 7. **Brotherly Kindness** is directed towards believers
 8. **Charity** is directed towards everyone!

H. Simple Outline of People to Learn from

1. Add to your faith the virtue or courage of David.
2. And to the courage of David, the knowledge of Solomon.
3. And to the knowledge of Solomon, the temperance of Paul
4. And to the temperance of Paul, the patience of Job.
5. And to the patience of Job, add the godliness of Daniel.
6. And to be godliness of Daniel, the brotherly kindness of Jonathon.
7. And to the brotherly kindness of Jonathon, and the love of John.

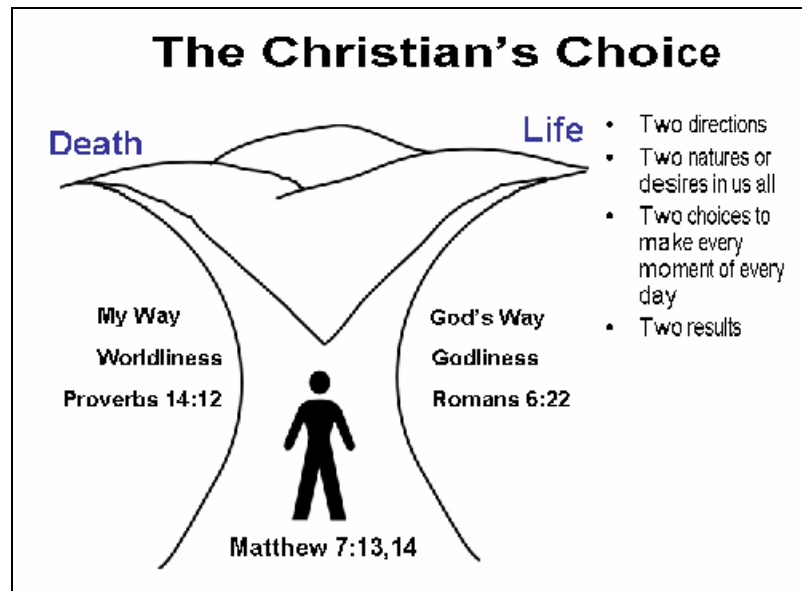
True Success

Facing every area of my life with the power of the Person of Jesus Christ



II. Practical Definition of Godliness

- A. Living and Thinking Like Jesus Did - In other words, *living toward God* instead of towards the world
- B. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” - Ti 2:11-12
- C. “True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it.” William Penn
- D. The opposite of godliness is... worldliness – like the world
- E. See CHART below...



III. Comparison of False with True Godliness

- A. False Godliness (2Tim 3:1-5)
 1. Displayed by those who are "lovers of pleasure" rather than "lovers of God"
 2. Such piety or godliness is just an outward form
 3. Done only to be seen by others, to impress them, for the purpose of self-glorification
- B. True Godliness
 1. True godliness is characterized by a "God-ward attitude"
 2. I.e., seeking to be seen and approved by God, not man
 3. Devoted to the will of God, desiring to please Him
 4. Unless we have this "God-ward attitude", any act of piety is simply hypocrisy
- C. The mystery of godliness is contrasted in the Bible with the mystery of iniquity (Cf 2 Thes 2:7) – both are hard to grasp

IV. Our Great Example of Godliness – Jesus (1Tim 3:16)

- A. When Paul says *Great*, he means, “How wonderful” and how amazing is this thing called godliness
- B. And Paul then summarizes the effect of the life of Christ
 1. **A Life lived in the flesh** – no cheating – God lived right here, among us, and under His own rules
 - a. Lived it out, day by day – no skipping home when no one was looking
 - b. Endured
 - c. Was tempted in all points that we are, yet without ever sinning
 - d. Felt pain, hurts, hunger, thirst, loneliness, and sorrow
 - e. Jesus lived and dwelt among us (John 1:14)
 2. **Jesus was Proven by the Holy Spirit** – empowered, and honoured by the Holy Spirit of God
 - a. Proven to be God in the flesh – no doubt – virgin birth, prophecies
 - b. Shown to be right – resurrected like He said He would
 - c. Didn't ever show off – He was exonerated, and exalted

3. **Watched from heaven** – Jesus had heaven’s attention the whole time (cf Acts 19:15) – glued to their “TV sets”
 - a. At any moment all of heaven would have bolted for this planet to aid Him – in the wilderness temptation
 - b. On the cross – could have called 12 legions of angels
 4. **He preached to the uttermost person** – those most unlike Him – Gentiles, lost, ignorant, no rights
 - a. Samaritan women
 - b. Lepers
 - c. Canaanite woman
 - d. Roman centurion
 - e. Woman caught in adultery
 - f. After the resurrection, His followers were commanded to go to the uttermost parts of the earth and to compel every and all people everywhere to come home!
 5. **He was and is believed on and trusted by the whole world** – not just by a select few, but by young and old, smart and dumb, rich and poor
 6. **He is now in heaven, seated in glory and is King of kings and Lord of lords!**
- C. Try to measure up to Him! Well, that is the goal! Godliness is to have my life lined up with Christ’s life – to be living God-ward, instead of world-ward

V. Facts About Godliness

- A. **Godliness is Awesome** – it is GREAT – not for wimps and cowards. It is profitable for all things... (1 Ti 4:7-8; 6:6)
 1. Profitable for the life that now is - Mt 6:33; Mk 10:28-30
 2. Profitable for the life to come - Mk 10:30; Ro 6:22
 3. It is a way of life to be lived NOW because it is what eternity is like 2 Pe 3:10-14
 - a. Everything in this life, of this world, (the universe, the earth, and all its works) will one day be utterly destroyed – the real big bang!
 - b. So, what manner of persons ought we to be RIGHT NOW?
 4. Godliness is the only true wealth worth striving for!
- B. **Godliness is a source of Real Power in Your Life.**
 1. Paul warned about those with a form of godliness, but denying its power - 2 Ti 3:5
 2. True godliness contains "power"
 3. In other words, if our conduct pleases God, He empowers us!
 - a. He works in us as we strive to do His will - Ph 2:12-13
 - b. He strengthens us by His Spirit in the inner man - cf. Eph 3:16
 - c. With a power beyond comprehension - Ep 3:20
 - d. Enabling us to stand strong in the strength of His might - Ep 6:10-13
 4. -- Do we desire power from God in our daily living? Then godliness, godly living, is necessary!
- C. **Godliness is only learned** – it is not automatic, nor naturally occurring in your life:
 1. Learned through right instruction (1Tim 6:3-11)
 2. And learned through patiently going through trials – godliness is Built Upon Patience – no short-cuts. It is something that is ADDED to our lives, one experience at a time – not automatic
- D. **Godliness Shows** - In every area of our life that is seen by those around us
 1. The way we talk – godly or worldly
 2. The way we give – liberally or selfishly
 3. The way we dress – modestly or worldly
 4. The way we love – selflessly or greedily
 5. The way we think and feel – about others, or only about ourselves
 6. The way we die – expectantly and restfully – only falling asleep, or fearfully, and lost!
- E. **Godliness Costs** (2Tim 3:12; Lk 21:17)

VI. Growing in Godliness

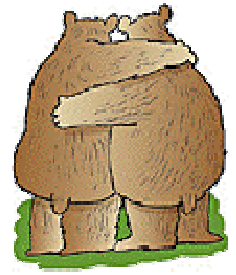
- A. **Requires Exercise...** strenuous effort on our part
 - 1. As Paul told Timothy (1 Ti 4:7-8)
 - a. Just as physical exercise provides benefit for healthy living
 - b. Even more so, spiritual exercise provides benefit for godly living
 - 2. The type of spiritual exercise needed - cf. 1 Ti 4:12-16
 - a. Set out to be a consistently good example for others
 - b. Give attention to reading (esp. the Word of God), exhortation (preaching), doctrine (learning what is true and right)
 - c. Make good use of your abilities and opportunities – use your life as a blessing to others – work at your Christianity
 - d. Focus your efforts on living towards God, and your growth will be evident – easily seen by everyone
 - 3. As Peter said, it requires "giving all diligence" - cf. 2Pet 1:5
- B. **Requires Abstinence...**
 - 1. From disputes and arguments over words - 1Tim 6:3-4
 - 2. From men who wrangle over words - 1Tim 6:5
 - 3. From materialism and the love of money - 1Tim 6:6-10
- C. **Flee these things, all the while hotly pursuing godliness** (1Tim 6:11) – like a police car after a suspect, or a man after a bride!

VII. Conclusion

- A. It is God's desire that we live godly lives, God-ward lives - Living and Thinking Like Jesus Did - In other words, *living toward God* instead of towards the world
- B. Satan will direct his efforts on getting your focus on this world, and on this life, and on the failures and frustrations of this life, instead of on the Lord
- C. Godliness has an enemy – self-righteousness
 - 1. Any other focus in our lives, other than that of Jesus Christ, is a wrong focus – a wrong target, a wrong goal!
 - 2. Love not the world, neither the things in the world
- D. Our Great Example of godliness is Jesus
- E. He proved that Godliness is Great, it is a source of REAL power, and it is something that is ADDED to our lives, one experience at a time – not automatic
- F. Godliness Shows - In every area of our life that is seen by those around us
 - 1. The way we talk – godly or worldly
 - 2. The way we give – liberally or selfishly
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 - 5. The way we think and feel – about others, or only about ourselves
 - 6. The way we die – expectantly and restfully – only falling asleep, or fearfully, and lost!
- G. Godliness Grows in Our Lives by
 - 1. Spiritual Exercise... strenuous effort on our part
 - 2. Abstinence...
 - a. From disputes and arguments over words - 1Tim 6:3-4
 - b. From men who wrangle over words - 1Tim 6:5
 - c. From materialism and the love of money - 1Tim 6:6-10
 - 3. Fleeing those things, all the while hotly pursuing godliness (1Tim 6:11)

Brotherly Kindness

Loving Believers Like Family
“And to godliness brotherly kindness”
 1 Peter 3:8



I. Introduction

- A. Faith gets us into God’s family, and forms the foundation upon all the rest of our life
- B. Virtue keeps us from getting trapped and defeated by sin
- C. Knowledge gives me answers for the problems I go through, and for the uncertainties in those troubles – in other words, if I could just KNOW some things, the devil cannot scare me!
- D. Temperance helps me control myself when I want to do wrong!
- E. Patience enables me to wait on God as I grow and as I struggle – he has grace with me, I should too!
- F. Next comes godliness, and it is directed towards the world I live in
- G. The main emphasis of “religions” today is to try to get to people to be “kind to one another” and to “love one another”
- H. But notice how the Bible says that is something that can only be accomplished when attempted AFTER these other things are part of your life – Brotherly Kindness

II. Through Thick and Thin – Defining Brotherly Kindness

- A. **It is A Uniquely Christian Concept** (Jn 13:34)
 1. Treating Christians like they are “family” (1Pet 3:8; 2:17)
 2. Before you try to “love everybody” you had better get a good handle on loving the brethren, and being kind TO THEM
 3. Preferring one another over the pub, the old friends (Rom 12:10; Gal 6:10), over your own wants, and pleasures
 4. Why? Because
 - a. We have the same Father now
 - b. We serve the same Master – Jesus
 - c. We are all in the same Family – the family of God
 - d. We are all travelling through the same strange land
 - e. We are all heirs of the same inheritance
- B. **It is Definitely Not Easy** - This is the second hardest challenge for the Christian (2Pet 1:7)
 1. Maybe you are able to get along with people
 2. Maybe able to like them
 3. Some even able to love
 4. But to love FERVENTLY? Yeah right! (1Pet 1:22)
 5. This attitude and approach towards Bible believers must be worked on (Col 3:12)
 6. This step will be attacked – yet must be maintained (Heb 13:1) – through thick and thin – like a marriage
 - a. Someone entered your family – gotta love them!
 - b. Got to love them in good times, AND bad, sickness and health
- C. **It is Proof that You are a Christian** - Loving and caring about Christians is a proof that you are a Christian (1Jn 3:14,18,19)
- D. **It is More than just being “Nice”** - The way you ought to treat your brother – not always soft and gentle, but always in love
 1. Kind, tender, sacrificial over-all (1Jn 3:16)
 2. Yet, straight-up, direct, correcting (Gal 4:16; Eph 4:15)
 3. Always because you are looking out for a member of the family (Pr 27:6)
 4. That’s God’s kind of kindness (Ps 141:5; Isa 54:8,10)

III. What is a Christian Without Brotherly Kindness?

- A. **Alone** - Without brotherly kindness in our words, and relationships, a person may be saved, but will end up not an active part of the new family that God placed them in (Eph 2:19)
- B. **Angry**
 1. It is the natural replacement of kindness

2. Knowledgeable of the Bible, but harsh, and cruel, spiteful, vengeful – not aware that God commands us to treat each other with great care!

C. **Anti-christ** – ends up working against the work of Christ in people’s lives, and in their own (1Pet 2:21-25)

IV. Example of Brotherly Kindness - Joseph towards his brothers (Gen 37-45)

A. Background

1. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, then came his Twelve Sons
2. Joseph was favoured by his Daddy (Gen 37:3,4)
3. The other brothers let jealousy ruin their home (37:18-20, 23-28, 36)
 - a. Hated, envied, and ultimately ABUSED their brother Joseph
 - b. Thought about just killing him – as Cain did
 - c. Then decided to sell him – for the cut-rate 20 pieces of silver (less than the normal 30 pieces that a slave would be worth)!!!
4. Joseph is gone (39:1)!
 - a. Into slavery Joseph went – for the next 13 years
 - b. Then into prison for the next 3 years (39:20)
 - c. But then, God raised up Joseph to rule as prince of Egypt
 - d. But won’t meet his brothers for another 8 years
 - e. Through it all, God was with Joseph – GOD didn’t abandon him – God had a plan he was working out (Gen 39:2, 21)!!!
 - f. But Joseph DOES see his brothers again – after 22 years (42:3-8)!!!!

B. **Lessons to learn** - How would you handle a family situation like Joseph’s? Let’s look at Joseph’s “Brotherly Kindness”

1. **Loved them still** – never stayed angry at them, or got bitter – EVER!
2. **Left off the past** – no revenge sought
3. **Learned them their lesson** – was “rough” with them “for a season” but with kindness in the background through it all
 - a. Carefully worked things so they would care about Benjamin like they should have, and not ever treat Benjamin the way they treated him
 - b. Made sure they cared about their father’s feelings
 - c. Made sure Judah was not a killer anymore
4. **Let them stew**, and think things through – wasn’t quick to fix things (God does that) – just wanted a strong family
5. **Lent them a hand** - Took care of them – blessed them
6. **Loved them openly** – not ashamed to show them off as his brethren

C. **How does that Apply to a Church?** To the Family of God?

1. We are a big family now
2. Envy (imagination) still hurts and abuses people
3. How we REACT is far more important than how we are treated
4. Is God “with us?” Does God have a plan for each of us? Can we be a blessing anyway?
5. Ephesians 4:30,31 is still a direct command in the Bible

V. Nurturing Brotherly Kindness in Myself, AND in Others

- A. Accept it From God – He is VERY kind towards you!!! Very gentle!
- B. Do things NOT because someone is WORTHY, but because they are FAMILY
- C. Show kindness with FERVENCY – it will grow on you!
- D. Ask God to help you take this step

VI. Conclusion

- A. All begins with Jesus, who went through all that Joseph experienced, but on a massive scale – and yet loves us still – is kind to us still
- B. Have you accepted His kindness in dying for your soul’s sins? Have you been truly born again?
- C. If you are a child of God, believers deserve your kindness, your loving kindness, NOT because they are worthy, but because they are family

Charity – Part 1

Living Completely Unselfishly
“and to brotherly kindness charity”
1 Corinthians 13:13



I. Introduction – We have Come a Long Way...

- A. Faith is the foundation – we all must start here
 - 1. Not what a church believes, but who we believe in
 - 2. Personal, intimate, living faith in a living all powerful Saviour and God!
- B. Virtue defines what we allow ourselves to do, boxes us in away from sin
- C. Knowledge gives me the answers to what used to scare me, and defeat me – know the truth and the truth will make you free
- D. Temperance gives control of my life over to the Holy Spirit of God
- E. Patience enables me to wait on God as I grow and as I struggle!
- F. When I add **Godliness** to my life, I am adding actions, thought patterns, habits, desires that match the way Jesus lived
- G. Adding Brotherly Kindness means making sure I love other Christians above my job, my own needs, and that I make them part of my extended family – not kept for only at Church!

II. Defining the Undefinable (1Cor 13) – Charity

- A. Not just “love” but:
 - 1. Loving kindness
 - 2. A love that is expressed from the whole heart – not just part (Mt 22:37)
 - 3. Perfect love – with “self” completely out of the picture
- B. Charity is the highest step a person can achieve in this life
 - 1. It is better than sacrifices and religion (Mt 12:33)
 - 2. Is more important than life itself (Ps 63:3)
 - 3. Without it, nothing is worth anything (1Cor 13:1-3)
- C. Charity is the rarest form of love – like the rarest jewel
 - 1. Diamonds are not at all rare. The De Beers cartel would prefer you didn't know this, but annual world production of gem-quality diamond exceeds fifty million carats. This equals ten metric tons and would fill about 120 bushel baskets every year. Consider that the next time you cough up a few thousand euros for an engagement ring stone!
 - 2. The rarest gemstone in the world is Painite – less than 25 exist in the whole world – worth the most of all stones!
 - 3. Same is true with Charity
 - 4. But it shouldn't stay that way – God said find Charity, and Add it to your life! Jesus purchased this incredible treasure for everyone in this room
- D. The Only Selfless Love in the Bible... Jesus (Philp 2:5-8) - All the others had some ulterior motive involved in their love

III. The Need for Charity

- A. Somebody once said, "All church problems are really love problems. All human problems are love problems – love God, or love sin; love God or love self more)!"
- B. All the problems the Corinthian Christians were experiencing could have all been solved with charity (all the strife; divisions; incest; marital conflicts; lawsuits; stumbling blocks; financial compensation; disorders around the Lord's Supper; abuse of spiritual gifts). They were all heart problems!
- C. CHARITY versus LOVE
 - 1. Charity is a better word than love here.
 - 2. "Love" is sometimes mistaken as a feeling. However, "charity" always refers to love in action / giving.
 - 3. Charity is associated with conduct, not emotions.
 - 4. The world's idea of love is often lust since it's focus is on self and not others; on getting and not giving.
 - 5. Both Love and Charity are an act of the will (Matt. 22:36-40) involves commitment. Love is not accidental, but purposeful. Charity must be PUT ON (Col. 3:14) – it doesn't just accidentally happen.

HUMAN LOVE	CHARITY
Given selectively to a few	Given generously to all
Given to those we think are worthy	Given to those who are not worthy
Given to those who can give back to us	Given to those who cannot give back to us
Given as long as it is appreciated	Given even when it is not appreciated
Given in our own strength	Given from God's strength
Given out of what I don't need	Given out of what I do need
Can turn to bitterness if rejected	Grows deeper when it is rejected

- D. Who in this room has Charity?
 E. It is plain to see that we all need this in our lives!!!

IV. Fake Charity – seen love, acted out love, faked love, feeling-based love

- A. Giving of token gifts of money and goods to people in need – not ever giving what was necessary for YOU to survive
 B. Giving a bit of your time for a good cause
 C. Giving up things you didn't need anyway – things that are easy to lose
 D. None of this is charity at all – it is self-glorifying, easy to do, and pitiful to God and to those you give to
 E. Real love, real charity costs – involves a sacrifice

V. What Does Charity Do? How to test if your love is charitable or not

- A. It edifies (1Cor 8:1) – builds up, improves, blesses, strengthens, encourages
 B. It meets needs (1Jn 3:17; Mt 25:35)
 C. It covers a multitude of sins and failures (1Pet 4:8) – buries them instead of the offender
 D. It is kind while suffering (1Cor 13:4) – never vengeful
 E. It fulfils the whole law (Mt 22:37,39; 1Tim 1:5)

VI. We Ought to Be Very Ashamed

- A. We have settled for a feeling kind of love that switches on and off according to our environment
 B. We have not know the extent (size) of the love of God
 C. We think love is an option, instead of a command
 D. We need to repent of cold, sinful hearts

VII. Next Week – 1 Corinthians 13

- A. A look at an entire chapter in the word of God to see what our love-life ought to be like
 B. How to Add Charity into the Life of a Believer. Not an easy task!

Charity – Part 2

The Power of Charity
1 Corinthians 13

I. Introduction (1 Peter 4:8)

- A. People sing a lot about *love* - the best songs truly are love songs
- B. But just because the whole world is so focused on love, singing about love, and so many books are written these days about romance... that doesn't mean they know the slightest what they are talking, writing and singing about!
- C. It has been said, that "Love does something to a person":
 1. Makes people do silly things – embarrassing things
 2. Messes up their minds - so they can't think, eat, or work
 3. Makes people good to nobody - "never mind him - he's in love"
- D. But I want to show you what **God's love** can do to a person - it is called **Charity**, and it is like nothing this world has ever seen before! Whatever this kind of love is (and the Bible tells us), according to 1 Peter 4:8, it is capable of covering, burying a multitude of sins - which is an amazing power!

II. Review – We have Come a Long Way...

- A. Faith is the foundation – we all must start here. A Personal, intimate, living faith in a living all powerful Saviour and God!
- B. Virtue defines what we allow ourselves to do, boxes us in away from sin
- C. Knowledge gives me the answers to what used to scare me, and defeat me – know the truth and the truth will make you free
- D. Temperance gives control of my life over to the Holy Spirit of God
- E. Patience enables me to wait on God as I grow and as I struggle!
- F. When I add **Godliness** to my life, I am adding actions, thought patterns, habits, desires that match the way Jesus lived
- G. Adding Brotherly Kindness means making sure I love other Christians above my job, my own needs, and that I make them part of my extended family – not kept for only at Church!
- H. But there is ONE MORE STEP TO TAKE... **Add Charity!**

III. Message

A. Let's Continue to Define the Undefinable (1Cor 13) – Charity

1. Charity is Not just “love” but:
 - a. Loving kindness
 - b. Something expressed from the whole heart – not just part (Mt 22:37)
 - c. Perfect love – with “self” completely out of the picture
 - d. We are talking about a form of love unknown to the world (John 15:19; 1John 3:1) – a love without limits!
 - e. Christian love is something that originated only in the Bible, and through personally knowing Jesus– it is experienced, not studied!
2. Charity is the highest step a person can achieve in this life
 - a. It is better than sacrifices and religion (Mt 12:33)
 - b. Is more important than life itself (Ps 63:3)
 - c. Without it, nothing is worth anything (1Cor 13:1-3)
3. Charity is the rarest form of love – like the rarest jewel – not common – why? Because it is not *affection* (fondness), or an attraction, or an attachment, or an affair, or an act – that is normal, natural love
 - a. It is not love for lovely objects (Rom 5:6-8)
 - b. It is not shown towards someone like you (Mt 5:46,47) – it has to be greater than a normal, natural way of feeling
 - c. It is not initiated, or sustained by feelings or emotions – get this!
4. The Only Selfless Love in the Bible... Jesus (Philp 2:5-8) - All the others had some ulterior motive involved in their love. In other words, Charity is the very Person of Jesus Christ – it's not an ideal, but a reality! Every line of 1Corinthians 13 is Jesus Christ – full stop!

- a. **An Interactive love** - He lived, moved, interacted among us
- b. **A Proactive love** - Jesus was way ahead of our senses and desires. His love, charity was able to see what was really needed - that He lay down His life for us (John 15:13). Didn't have to be asked
- c. **A Mature love** - one that when everyone and everything went against Him, He remained *for* them

B. The Need for Charity

1. All of life's problems are heart problems (Prov 4:23) – end of story. If only we focused on this one area of our life, and got it truly fixed, nothing would defeat us! Drugs are a heart problem, drink, bullying, etc
2. Somebody once said, "All church problems are really love problems. All human problems are love problems" – we either love God, or love sin; we either love God, or love self more; we either love God, or we love this world!
3. All the problems the Corinthian Christians were experiencing could have been solved with charity (the strife; divisions; incest; marital conflicts; lawsuits; stumbling blocks; financial problems; disorders around the Lord's Supper; the abuse of spiritual gifts). They were all heart problems!
4. CHARITY versus LOVE – review from last week
 - a. "Charity" is a better word than "love" here.
 - b. "Love" is sometimes mistaken as a feeling. However, "charity" always refers to love in action / giving – it is our motive for loving
 - c. Charity is associated with conduct (what you do), never emotions.
 - d. The world's idea of love is often *lust* since it's focus is on self and not others; on getting and not giving.
 - e. Both Love and Charity are an act of the will (Mt 22:36-40) involves commitment. It is not accidental, but purposeful. Charity must be PUT ON (Col 3:14) – it doesn't just accidentally happen.

HUMAN LOVE	CHARITY
Given selectively to a few	Given generously to all
Given to those we think are worthy	Given to those who are not worthy
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Given as long as it is appreciated	Given even when it is not appreciated
Given in our own strength	Given from God's strength
Given out of what I don't need	Given out of what I do need
Can turn to bitterness if rejected	Grows deeper when it is rejected

5. Who in this room has Charity? It is plain to see that we all need this in our lives!

C. The Purpose of Charity

1. To be the bedrock, the foundation of our lives – it is to be the motive that drives EVERYTHING, absolutely EVERYTHING we do (1Cor 16:14)
2. If you don't have this foundation, then all other efforts are vain! That is what Paul was saying in 1 Cor 13:1-3
 - a. If you could master all languages, and command crowds and angels
 - b. If you had great faith, and knowledge of the Bible, and the ability to know everything there is to know
 - c. If you were the richest person in the world, and gave away all your goods, and even forfeited your life in sacrifice
 - d. Yet have not "charity," then you have really done nothing!
 - e. HAVING CHARITY IS THAT IMPORTANT!

D. The Power of Charity (1Cor 13:4-8a). What Charity Produces:

1. Charity produces 10 characteristics - marks - in the life of the believer. These are things that only Christ can plant in you, starting in your heart, and produce:
 - a. **Suffereth long, and is kind - Grace** - the ability to suffer long, and yet be kind in your response – that's what grace is – thank God for the grace of God (Eph 2:8,9) Charity is PATIENT (v. 4), even when you feel like complaining (cf. Gal. 5:22). Charity is willing to suffer pain and trials a long time without resentment.

- b. **Envieth not - Contentment** - not wishing for another life, or a better life, but instead thankful, so thankful to God for everything already in your life. Corinth had a major problem with envy (1Cor 3:3) Charity is not envious (v. 4) of other people when they are getting more attention than you. Charity does not participate in rivalry
 - c. **Vaunteth not itself - Down-to-earth realness** - doesn't try and "vaunt" or make themselves bigger than they really are - does not parade itself in front of others! Charity does not brag or show off (v. 4), even when you feel like telling everyone about your accomplishments. Love deflects praise towards another. Love is never vain.
 - d. **Is not puffed up - Humility** – to be “puffed up” means full of pride, which is only air, vanity! The Christian who has added Charity doesn’t do that – not at all, but steps down as John the Baptist did (John 3:30) Charity is not conceited, proud, self-assertive (“bossy”) or overbearing (v. 4), even when you feel you are right and everyone else is wrong. Love doesn’t act as though you are better than another (Phil 2:3).
 - e. **Not unseemly in behaviour - Courtesy** - is never out of character - always beautiful, always courteous, always polite (oh how we need this)! Charity always acts in good taste (v. 5) and conforms to what is right and appropriate. Love is never rude, indecent, or unmannerly. Love shows respect.
 - f. **Seeketh not her own - Self-lessness** - Desires a change from seeking your own, to seeking another person's benefit! Charity doesn’t demand it’s rights (v. 5), even when you feel like you’ve been violated. Love is unselfish and never seeks it’s own benefits (Phil. 2:4).
 - g. **Is not easily provoked - Thick-skin** - it takes a lot to irritate charity. Charity is not irritable (v. 5), even when you feel someone failed to meet your expectations. Love is not “touchy,” and is not offended.
 - h. **Thinketh no evil - Forgiveness** - the ability to pass right over a direct hurt, and be ready to forgive (Cf 1Tim 6:4, evil surmising) Charity is not critical nor takes into account a wrong suffered (v. 5) even when you feel you don’t deserve the treatment you’ve received. Love holds no grudges. Love forgives (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9).
 - i. **Rejoices not in iniquity - Hates sin.** Charity hates to see anyone sin (v. 6). Love gets no enjoyment from sin even when someone else is doing it (cf. Rom. 1:31). Love mourns over sin.
 - j. **Rejoices in the truth – Delights in Good things, true things – in Reality** - rejoices in certainty. Not blind faith, but following the truth of this Book – the Bible! Charity is truthful (v. 6) even when it would be easier and more profitable to lie. Love rejoices in the promotion of truth. Beware of anyone who doesn’t love the preaching of the Word of God.
2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE (13:4-8a). Since "God is love," these verses give a good description of the character of God. How well do these sixteen characteristics apply to you?
- a. Charity is PATIENT (v. 4), even when you feel like complaining (cf. Gal. 5:22). Charity is willing to suffer pain and trials a long time without resentment.
 - b. Charity is kind (v. 4), even when you feel like retaliating or speaking badly about another.
 - 1) Love is not hurtful, but helpful.
 - 2) Love is courteous to others.
 - 3) Love says "please" and "thank-you."
 - c. Charity is not envious (v. 4) of other people when they are getting more attention than you. Charity does not participate in rivalry.
 - d. Charity does not brag or show off (v. 4), even when you feel like telling everyone about your accomplishments. Love deflects praise towards another. Love is never vain.
 - e. Charity is not conceited, proud, self-assertive ("bossy") or overbearing (v. 4), even when you feel you are right and everyone else is wrong. Love doesn't act as though you are better than another (Phil 2:3).
 - f. Charity always acts in good taste (v. 5) and conforms to what is right and appropriate. Love is never rude, indecent, or unmannerly. Love shows respect.
 - g. Charity doesn't demand it's rights (v. 5), even when you feel like you've been violated. Love is unselfish and never seeks it's own benefits (Phil. 2:4).
 - h. Charity is not irritable (v. 5), even when you feel someone failed to meet your expectations. Love is not "touchy," and is not offended.
 - i. Charity is not critical nor takes into account a wrong suffered (v. 5) even when you feel you don't deserve the treatment you've received. Love holds no grudges. Love forgives (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9).
 - j. Charity hates to see anyone sin (v. 6). Love gets no enjoyment from sin even when someone else is doing it (cf. Rom. 1:31). Love mourns over sin.

- k. Charity is truthful (v. 6) even when it would be easier and more profitable to lie. Love rejoices in the promotion of truth. Beware of anyone who doesn't love the preaching of the Word of God.
 - l. Charity doesn't collapse under stress (v. 7), even when you feel like everything is going wrong. Love sustains and is tolerant, and puts up with other's who are difficult (Eph. 4:2-3; Col. 3:13).
 - m. Charity is trusting and not suspicious (v. 7). Love gives people the benefit of the doubt.
 - n. Charity never gives up hope (v. 7), even when a situation looks hopeless.
 - o. Charity doesn't quit (v. 7), even when you feel like quitting.
 - p. Charity finds a way to succeed (v. 8), even when you feel overwhelmed and doomed to fail.
3. In summary, Christian love - charity - has five qualities (1Cor 13:7,8a)
- a. **It bears up under any pressure** - has great strength. Charity doesn't collapse under stress (v. 7), even when you feel like everything is going wrong. Love sustains and is tolerant, and puts up with other's who are difficult (Eph. 4:2-3; Col. 3:13).
 - b. **It gives people the benefit of the doubt** - has great grace. Charity is trusting and not suspicious (v. 7). Love gives people the benefit of the doubt.
 - c. **It believes every promise of God** - has great hope. Charity never gives up hope (v. 7), even when a situation looks hopeless.
 - d. **It outlasts every trial** - has great patience. Charity doesn't quit (v. 7), even when you feel like quitting.
 - e. **It works every time** - never fails
4. Don't you think we all need this thing added to all our lives?! Charity finds a way to succeed (v. 8), even when you feel overwhelmed and doomed to fail.

IV. Conclusion -

- A. **The Meaning of Charity** - Something quite unknown to the world. It is the by-product of being loved by God, and lived in the life of Jesus Christ!
- B. **The Need for Charity** – all of life's problems are heart problems – end of story. If only we focused on this one area of our life, and got it truly fixed, nothing would defeat us!
- C. **The Purpose of Charity** - to be the bedrock, foundation of our lives in our relationship with God, and then in relation to other people!
- D. **The Power of Charity**. Charity produces 10 of the most outstanding characteristics that you can only find in a relationship with Jesus!
 - 1. It bears up under any pressure - has great strength
 - 2. It gives people the benefit of the doubt - has great grace
 - 3. It believes every promise of God - has great hope
 - 4. It outlasts every trial - has great patience
 - 5. It works every time - never fails
- E. **Next Week - How to Grow Charity in the Life of a Believer**

Charity – Part 3

How to Grow Charity in the Life of the Believer
Jeremiah 17:9,10

I. Introduction (Jer 17:9,10)

- A. We all believe our hearts basically are right, and that we love right, and that all our problems are external – but God says, all of our problems are heart problems – every drink problem is a heart problem – every home problem is a heart problem – every drug problem is a heart problem – every money problem is a heart problem!!!
- B. Somebody once said, "All church problems are really love problems – we either love God, or love sin; love God or love self more!
- C. All the problems a Christian experiences can be solved with charity (all the strife; divisions; incest; marital conflicts; lawsuits; stumbling blocks; financial compensation; disorders around the Lord's Supper; abuse of spiritual gifts). They are all heart problems!

II. What is Charity? Charity is Not just “love” but:

- A. Loving kindness
- B. Something expressed from the whole heart – not just part (Mt 22:37)
- C. Perfect love – with “self” completely out of the picture
- D. We are talking about a form of love unknown to the world (John 15:19; 1John 3:1) – **a love without limits!**
- E. Christian love is something that originated only in the Bible, and through personally knowing Jesus– it is experienced, not studied!
- F. The Best example of Selfless Love in the Bible... Jesus (Philp 2:5-8) - All the others had some ulterior motive involved in their love. In other words, Charity is the very Person of Jesus Christ – it's not an ideal, but a reality! Every line of 1Corinthians 13 is Jesus Christ – full stop!
- G. But how does a person ADD this way of loving to his or her life? If God says to do it, then how can do it? (2Peter 1:3-8)

III. Message - How Charity Grows in the Life of a Believer - it has to be carefully added, bit by bit, trial by trial, choice by choice, prayer by prayer. But it all starts with Jesus, knocking to come in (Rev 3:20; Rom 5:8) to give you something this world cannot provide – charity love!

A. Accept it First.

1. Realize you don't have it at first – whatever love you do have, is only a shadow of what Jesus Christ offers you (1Jn 4:7)!
2. So you must first receive it (Lk 7:47) through forgiveness– it grows according to how much we have been forgiven!
 - a. As sinners we are enemies of God (Rom 5:8-10)
 - b. Our sin has separated us from God (Isa 59:2)
 - c. God so loved that He gave (John 3:16) – will you receive?
3. Allow God to love you when you won't love yourself! Let Him Give you...
 - a. A new heart
 - b. A soft heart (Ezek 36:26)
 - c. A ready heart – yearning to be used by the Lord – it comes from a personal, intimate hungry relationship with God!

B. Seek More of It (1Cor 14:1; 1Pet 4:8) Seek it like the rarest treasure that it is

1. This is something that no heart can get enough of.
2. Seek after it first in the pages of this Bible – you add this part of Christ's nature only as you understand it – so you have to really learn the lessons of this Book! The mind of Christ, the heart of Christ!
3. That means pay the price it demands – Charity is not free! It was when directed at you, but the ability to have charity towards others costs a lot!
 - a. 1Pet 2:5 Make some spiritual sacrifices
 - b. Mark 12:33 Love towards God and others is a great sacrifice
4. Pursue after Charity by making sure all the other steps have been taken in your life (2Pet 1:5-8):
 - a. Faith
 - b. Virtue

- c. Knowledge
 - d. Temperance
 - e. Patience
 - f. Godliness
 - g. Brotherly Kindness
 - h. And make sure they ABOUND (2Pet 1:8)
5. Become filled with the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22) – He is the source of charity, and the giver of all grace so that you can love without limits
 6. Give out selfless love – love without limits
 - a. At Home (Eph 5:25; Tit 2:4)
 - b. Make sure you express it in this church (1Pet 4:8)
 - c. Everywhere – what a difference this world would see if we lived and loved this way!

C. Nurture It

1. Carefully add it to every area of your life like adding shingles to every area of a roof (1Cor 16:14; Col 3:10-14; 2Tim 2:22)
2. Loving Jesus supremely (Jn 14:21,23)
3. Quick to forgive any trespass against you
4. Slow to wrath – GIVE benefit of doubt – stop judging, stop coming to evil conclusions – be gracious and still firm, but a lot of grace!

D. Protect It (Prov 4:23).

1. Get rid of known sins that affect your heart – premeditated, wilful sins - iniquity (Mt 24:12; 1Pet 1:22)
2. Especially repent of loving this world (1John 2:15) – the idols, the styles, the pleasures of sin for a season – no way for the two loves to co-exist

IV. Conclusion

- A. Charity is something quite unknown to the world. It is the by-product of being loved by God, and forgiven by God!
- B. All of life's problems are heart problems – end of story. If only we focused on this one area of our life, and got it truly fixed, nothing would defeat us!
- C. Charity is to be the bedrock, foundation of our lives in our relationship with God, and then in relation to other people!
- D. Charity produces 10 of the most outstanding characteristics that you can only find in a relationship with Jesus (1Cor 13)!
- E. How Can We Have More of this kind of love in our lives?
 1. Accept it First
 2. Seek More of It
 3. Nurture It
 4. Protect It
- F. Next Week – Beating the Barrenness of Modern Christianity

The Dangers of Stagnation, and How to Avoid It

*Christian Should Fear Backsliding, and Stagnating in Their Walk With God
Philippians 2:12,13*

I. Introduction (Philippians 2:12,13)

- A. God puts some things inside the believer – it is all part of being born again
 - 1. He puts His Holy Spirit in us – seals Him in
 - 2. He puts eternal life itself in us – passed from death unto life
 - 3. He puts a purpose – a calling – into our lives
- B. He expects us to work those things out through our fingers and toes – to live differently than we did before we got saved – to BE different, through and through
- C. But it doesn't all happen naturally
 - 1. By nature, everything hot cools off
 - 2. Spiritual things have to be “stirred-up” and revived to be kept warm (2Pet 1:13)
- D. This is going to be a warning about backsliding, and becoming carnal, and not growing, and drying up, and growing lukewarm, and then cold!
- E. But then, it will be a challenge to grow and glow hot and bright in this dark day and hour

II. Message - The Dangers of Stagnation – staying the same for too long

A. Understanding Barren Lives.

- 1. The Barren earth at creation (Genesis 1:1-3)
- 2. The Parable of the fig tree – no fruit (Luke 13:1-6)
- 3. Barren wombs – no children
 - a. Sarah (Gen 11:30) - Isaac
 - b. Hannah (1Sam 1) - Samuel
 - c. Elisabeth (Luke 1:7) – John the Baptist
- 4. The dilemma of Barren Christians – most have no real fruit
- 5. We were created by God to bear fruit – and we definitely were SAVED to bear much fruit (John 15:3-8)

B. Understanding Unfruitfulness.

- 1. The Parable of the Thorny Soil (Matthew 13:18,22):
 - a. Becomes unfruitful because of stress, worries, wrong priorities, and the cares of this world
 - b. Boils down to the softness of the heart
- 2. Fruitfulness is only accomplished by:
 - a. Walking with God (Psalm 1:1-3)
 - b. Abiding in Christ. Jesus saved us to enable us to be fruitful (John 15:1,2,5) – without Him we can produce nothing of value

C. The Deceit of False Fruit.

- 1. To Gain the whole world's wealth (Matthew 16:26)
- 2. To Have all of men's admiration
- 3. To be Full of Religious Zeal (Philippians 3:4-9)
- 4. To only be a Hypocrite – actor – a tare – to put on a show

D. Real Christian Growth.

- 1. Starts with Faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:10,11)
- 2. You have to ADD seven Christ-like attitudes and actions – get them INTO you (2Pet 1:3-11)
- 3. You have to LET them work in you and through you – turn them loose (2Peter 1:8) – they are the changing power of your life
- 4. Growth will please you and God - Enjoy the fruit that results

E. Warning!

- 1. If you don't grow...
- 2. If you backslide...
- 3. If you cool off, and stay cooled-off...

4. You will lose big-time (2Peter 1:9-11):
 - a. Lose your sight – no spiritual awareness
 - b. Lose your memory – forgetting spiritual victories
 - c. Lose your progress – constantly fall back
 - d. Lose your heavenly rewards

F. God's Promises.

1. God has given us Four Things
 - a. "Divine power" (1:3)
 - b. "Great and precious promises" (1:4)
 - c. Seven spiritual ingredients to add to our lives
 - d. A perfect "calling and election" (1:10)
2. With such help
 - a. You can't but bear fruit (1:8) – it will come!
 - b. You are promised to never fall (1:10)
 - c. You will be rewarded in heaven (1:11)

G. A Christian's Fruit.

1. Pleasure to God – by faith, walk the walk
2. Changed life – new creature (2Cor 5:17)
3. Godly life – more like Jesus
4. A Christian family – saved and with one heart because of your changed life!
5. Another "life" – soul-winning – spiritual children
6. Our World turned "upside down"

III. Conclusion

- A. God calls it becoming "**barren**", "**unfruitful**" when we are not what we could be – that's when a Christian is useless to God and ends up with nothing spiritual accumulated in his/her life
 1. The apostle Paul feared very few things, but one of them was becoming useless to God (1Cor 9:27)
 2. Christians are called to "follow Christ" - not retire, or go on holiday, or drag your feet – that is when the devil starts his attack (like when a lion stalks a herd, he focuses on the ones that are not with the herd, or are weak, or are independent, etc)!
 3. This is a day when the Christian life then must be lived with diligence.
 4. Young people may not know what the word 'diligence' means. It means to NOT "go with the flow!"
 - a. Many people simply float along with the stream. It is so easy to do because, if that is the way the current is going, then all they need to do is bob along with everything else that is floating down the stream. No hassles, right?
 - b. Some churches and some Christians, for a long time have been going that way: bobbing along with the "river of life." The tide or the stream is taking them out, and they are headed for disaster.
 - c. In order to go against the stream and against the tide, Christians will have to work very hard to keep their souls and minds in a right frame and attitude, if they are going to hold their ground and even make progress against the stream and against the tide of this modern world. These are the people who will gain the true blessing of God in the end.
 5. Peter saw this scenario in his day. You and I, unless we are blind, must also see it today. The choice is between drifting with the stream, and the current, and with the tide on the one hand or going against it, in order to maintain high Biblical values, and in order to hear a hearty "well done" from our Lord in the end!
 6. The fruit of the Christian includes:
 - a. The winning of a soul to Christ
 - b. The defeat of a sin and of Satan's plans
 7. Oh the blessing and joy of being not just a Christian, but a fruitful Christian! Wouldn't someone here today like to have that fruit be a result of their walk with Christ? I would!
- B. Remember - God Calls us to be patient Builders – fruit is not something that happens overnight!
 1. Our "**calling and election**" is God's perfect will and plan for your life – make it sure and steadfast so you don't fall out!
 2. What is God's calling for Christians? What is His calling for YOU?