

Writing to Christians, Peter said, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being either barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is blind, cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-11).

When one becomes a Christian he or she must begin to take on the characteristics of the Lord. Peter says we are to "be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). In the following verses he gives a plan for moral development. He identifies eight specific characteristics that we must wear.

Some see these as rungs in a ladder or as progressive steps. However, Peter does not seem to be giving any specific order. The Christian is to set aside sinful desires and actively seek the attributes that Peter describes in verses 5-7.

The importance of this is seen in the words, "giving all diligence." The Greek text suggests the idea "to work along side of," suggesting we must fully cooperate with God using all diligence in developing each characteristic.

The first quality is faith. Faith is basic. It is faith that brought us into the family of God. "Without faith is it impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Hence it is fundamental and basic from which all other characteristics spring.

Without faith, one would never become a child of God. But the Christian is not to stop at faith alone.

James warns Christians that faith without works is a dead faith. (James 2:17, 26). Faith must be more than belief in certain facts, it must result in action, growth in Christian character, and the practice of moral living.

Peter's list of actions does not come automatically; they require work. They are not optional; all of them must be a continual part of the Christian life. We don't finish one and start out on the next one, but we work on them all together.

God empowers and enables us, but he also gives us the responsibility to learn and to grow. Faith must go beyond what we believe; it must become a dynamic part of all we do, resulting in good fruits and spiritual maturity.

Next, Peter says, **"add to your faith virtue."** The word **"virtue"** can also be translated as goodness. It signifies moral excellence. To put it simply, it is purity.

We have been forgiven the guilt of past sins but this does not remove the temptations to sin that come after one becomes a Christian. So we must give careful attention to developing a good moral character and not fall back into our old ways.

This involves courage in a world where we are surrounded by evil. It is not always **"politically correct"** to stand up for what is moral. The world ridicules right living.

Paul wrote, **"all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."**

We must have the moral courage and determination to live a life that is pure and moral, regardless of what others may say about us.

To goodness we are to add **"knowledge."** This is a knowledge that leads to wisdom and discernment, enabling believers to live godly lives. Paul writes, **"Therefore do not be unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).**

Bible study helps us here. Faith in and knowledge of the Lord leads to spiritual growth. Without this knowledge a Christian is **"ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 8).** Such a person will be barren and unproductive and cannot make a difference in their world. Neither will he or she be able to persevere to the end of life.

To knowledge we are to add **"self-control."** This refers to mastery over sinful human desires in every aspect of life. Peter has explained that believers are saved so they can grow to be like Christ. God wants to reproduce His character in His people. But this demands discipline and effort.

Self-control is reaching the point where we can say no when powerful temptations inside of us scream yes. It is a long, steady course in learning to channel natural appetites toward God's will. Don't give in, don't give up. Be in control.

Peter proceeds to admonish us to add **"perseverance."** This is the ability to be steadfast. The KJV uses the word "patience." This is to keep on, keeping on. It is standing firm, willing to endure any suffering or evil without giving up your faith.

This word is often used in the N.T. to refer to steadfastness in the face of adversity and hardships in life. Paul instructs us "let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9). Don't ever give up. The Lord has promised he will be with us until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

To steadfastness we are to add "godliness." Godliness is not to be confused with goodness. As used by Peter it means an awareness of God in all of life. It involves humble reverence and respect for God. It gives recognition to the truth that "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

We know we must lean on Him. We recognize that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Prayer and worship are essential to accomplish this. They result in a close relationship with God and a lifestyle that exemplifies Christ.

Another characteristic is "brotherly kindness" which is a translation of the Greek word "*philadelphia*." It refers to a concerned caring for others. With non-Christians this referred to a relationship in families. Peter extends it to include the family of God. It is warm-hearted affection for brethren.

It will put others before self. Paul wrote, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem another better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interest of others" (Philippians 2:3, 4).

Finally we are to add "love." This is the Greek word "*agape*" which is the highest form of love. It is more inclusive than brotherly-kindness. Love refers to self-sacrificial love. It is the kind of love that God demonstrated in saving us, "in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Such love among believers will allow us to love the unlovable. It will not allow weaknesses and imperfections of others to stand in our way of showing love to them. It is strong commitment and loyalty to serving God and man at any cost.

After naming these eight characteristics Peter proceeds to say if these things "abound" in us we can be effective in his kingdom. These qualities ought to be a part of every believer's life. However, it is not enough simply to have each of these qualities but it is the responsibility of each person to abound in them.

If we are lacking in these things Peter says that we are blind and not able to see well (verse 9). This is spiritual myopia. Myopia is short-sightedness, the inability to see things distinctly.

There are many cases in the Bible of spiritual myopia. Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. He could not see the dangers that awaited him. The rich man neglected Lazarus. Demas could not see that the world could not satisfy his real needs. The prodigal son was unable to see the dangers that awaited him in a "far country."

The Christian cannot afford to take the Christian life lightly. Peter admonishes, "be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble" (verse 10).

That little word "if" is so significant. Our salvation is conditional. One is forgiven of all past sins when he or she has been baptized for the remission of their sins. But future forgiveness depends upon the kind of life that we live as a Christian. Peter says we can be assured of salvation provided we abound in these characteristics.

We will never reach perfection in any of them but we demonstrate are making an effort to walk in them. Therefore, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Be sure to make your "calling and election sure.....so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (vs. 10, 11). Don't flirt with sin but "be partakers of the divine nature." Then you will be given a great welcome in heaven. (See verse 11.)