

Things That Pertain Unto Life And Godliness

Based on 2 Peter 1:1-7

The two English words “godly” and “godliness” each include the term “god” indicating that these words describe spiritual qualities which relate to the person of God. But each of these English words come from different Greek words in the Bible giving a little different meaning to each one. The term “godly” comes from a Greek word which also includes the term “god” suggesting that a godly person is one who resembles God in his character or conduct. It is a vertical concept in which there is a direct relationship exhibited between what God is like and what the godly person is like. The term “godliness” on the other hand comes from a Greek word that does not include the term “god.” It suggests more of a horizontal concept in which a person puts on display his respect and affection for God by means of a strict adherence to those things which please Him. Whereas a godly person is one who strives to be like God, godliness is an expression of reverence, respect, and piety towards God which other people can observe. Thus to be godly is to be and do those things which directly resemble God Himself; and to exhibit godliness is to demonstrate to others one’s attitude of reverence and respect for God.

Peter addresses this matter of godliness in the first chapter of his second letter when he refers to *the things that pertain unto life and godliness* (2 Peter 1:3). He was writing to those who had *obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ* (vs.1). He says that these believers have been given *exceeding great and precious promises* by which they have become *partakers of the divine nature* (vs. 4). The lesson from this is that all believers enter into a covenant relationship with God the Father in which He provides each one with the capacity to live a godly life in accordance with His moral nature (Titus 2:12; Hebrews 12:10).

It is apparent from Peter’s discussion, though, that godliness is not automatically expressed in a believer’s life, but must be developed through a process of exercises. In verses 5 through 7 he says,

*And beside this, giving all diligence,
add to your faith virtue;
and to virtue knowledge;
And to knowledge temperance;
and to temperance patience;
and to patience godliness;
And to godliness brotherly kindness;
and to brotherly kindness charity.*

Start with faith, he says, and progressively add a series of character qualities, each one upon the other. By using the word “add” and implying it throughout the list, the Bible describes a progression of character building which is necessary in order to experience the full value of the divine nature of which we have become partakers. When a person is born again, God does not inject godliness into his inner man. Rather, He gives him ***the things***

that pertain unto life and godliness. It is then incumbent upon the believer to use these ingredients to construct godliness in his life. It is as though someone has given him all the ingredients needed for baking a cake, but he must bake the cake himself.

This is why a lot of Christians are not godly and do not express godliness in their daily lives. They have obtained faith and truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are saved and thus in possession of the things that pertain unto life and godliness. But they have not put forth the effort to add these things to their faith in their proper order so that godliness can actually become their testimony in this world.

If God says that we are to add things to our faith and then gives us the formula by which this is to be done, we ought to commit ourselves to the process. What happens when you bake a cake and leave out some of the ingredients? It isn't very tasty is it? God has given us a recipe for living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and it behooves us to follow it fully and not leave out any of the ingredients He has prescribed.

Beginning With Faith

Faith is the starting point. It is the connecting link between a man and God. Without it, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). But when the hearing of the Gospel is mixed with faith, a person is connected eternally to God (Hebrews 4:2-3; Romans 9:30-32; Romans 5:1).

Faith continues then in the Christian's life to direct him to activity that is pleasing to God. *The just, God says, shall live by faith* (Romans 1:17). That is, those who have already been justified by faith and stand just before God, shall live their daily Christian lives on the principle of faith. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23). But for a Christian, sin is not to be the rule of his life because faith, which is the opposite of sin, is to be the dominating principle by which he lives: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*** (Galatians 2:20). Faith thus becomes a commitment to be loyal to God, to believe Him without reservation, and to trust Him implicitly in everything.

Faith, however, is not the only ingredient necessary for spiritual maturity. It is possible for a Christian to have all faith so that he can remove mountains, but without charity he is nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2). Notice that the list of things that pertain unto life and godliness begins with faith and ends with charity. Faith works by love, or charity (Galatians 5:6), but in order to get to charity, a believer must work through the progression of all the ingredients listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Adding Virtue To Your Faith

Virtue is quality control. It is that which attaches adjectives of excellence in defining

the quality of our Christian testimony. For example, I am thinking of a chair. Can you see in your mind's eye the same chair that I have pictured in mine? You cannot unless I give you some descriptive adjectives. If I say I am thinking of a blue, stuffed, swivel rocking chair, you have a little better idea of what I am thinking about. If I add adjectives like soft and comfortable you begin to understand the real quality of the chair I have in mind. God persistently uses adjectives to describe the quality of things in the Bible. He does not just tell us about a crown, or a church, or a heart. He gives us an incorruptible crown (1 Corinthians 9:25); He transforms us into a glorious church (Ephesians 5:27); He wants us to have a pure heart (1 Timothy 1:5). Similarly He describes,

a more excellent way (1 Corinthians 12:31)

sufficient grace (2 Corinthians 12:9)

good works (Ephesians 2:10)

a perfect man (Ephesians 4:13)

true holiness (Ephesians 4:24)

sound words (2 Timothy 1:13)

and effectual fervent prayer (James 5:16).

There are many adjectives that might be used to describe the character of our lives. God wants the adjectives of excellence to be the ones by which we are known.

God puts virtue immediately after faith so that a commitment to excellence will guarantee quality control in the all the activities of our lives. If we possess a pure heart, clean hands, a renewed mind, and a good conscience, we predetermine the kind of choices we will make in our day to day experiences. It guarantees quality control in the subsequent steps we take toward maturity in Christ.

Adding Knowledge To Your Virtue

In a famous book of jests published in the 1500's and attributed to John Scogan, Edward the IV's fool, there is a story of a sly fellow who sought to establish himself as a natural idiot. He accomplished his objective when he stood under an open down spout during a rainstorm, giving birth to the modern day cliché, "He did not know enough to come in out of the rain."

The lack of knowledge, however, does not prevent some people from being very assertive in conversation. There are those who dote about questions and strifes of words even though they know nothing and are destitute of the truth (1 Timothy 6:4-5). There are those who desire to be teachers of the law, yet understand neither what they say nor what they affirm to be true (1 Timothy 1:6-7). Ignorance is a dangerous thing against which believers are warned repeatedly (Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 12:1; etc.).

But it is not just a matter of learning that is important. Christians must make choices as they accumulate knowledge. It is possible to be ever learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7). And there are imaginations that exalt themselves above the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:5). Jesus said if we know the

truth, the truth will set us free (John 8:32).

Therefore, it is necessary for us to be able to distinguish between knowledge that keeps us from the truth and knowledge that is truth. With a commitment to virtue, or quality control, a believer can govern the selection of things he learns and knows. As he comes to know the truth, he accumulates a resource of divine information that will build a godly restraint against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and that will construct a foundation for righteous conduct in human society.

Adding Temperance To Your Knowledge

Temperance is the strength to contain the desires of the flesh and prevent them from being the dominant influence in how we live. It is a product of the direct work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). It is not something we can ever achieve within ourselves. As a fruit of the Spirit, temperance is accomplished by Him as we yield to His filling and control of our lives. As such, temperance is the Spiritual discipline necessary for living a godly life.

Knowledge comes before temperance, because knowledge is foundational to spiritual discipline. *Thy word*, the Psalmist said, *have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee* (Psalm 119:11). As the believer stores the Word of God in his heart, the Holy Spirit uses this knowledge to produce the restraint that is necessary to avoid irresponsible behavior. This gives him the freedom to become a doer of the Word and not a hearer only.

Yieldedness to the Holy Spirit becomes then a very important step toward godliness. This is why we are admonished to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and to yield the members of our body as instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:13). Only by yielding to the Holy Spirit can we achieve the temperance spiritual maturity requires.

Adding Patience To Your Temperance

Patience is the willingness to stay in one place under any circumstances. You might say there is a fine line between stubbornness and patience. For example, we might describe those who live on the coast in Florida and the Carolinas and who refuse to leave their homes during a hurricane as stubborn. But it is that tenacity that is required in patience – the ability to stay put no matter how long it takes or how difficult it becomes until the storm finally passes.

Patience is a pivotal character trait in the life of a believer. It determines whether he will turn back and be a mediocre Christian with a fairly infantile level of spirituality or if he will press on toward the mark for the prize of the calling of God in Christ Jesus.

True hope results from combining the truth of the Bible with the character of patience (Romans 15:4). Temperance is sandwiched in between knowledge and patience by Peter because it is the glue that puts these two things together. Without Spiritual discipline,

patience is not possible. But when a Christian knows the truth and is disciplined through yieldedness to the Holy Spirit, patience becomes a very possible exercise in his life.

Patience is necessary in reaching the goals for which we have hope. We cannot simply run the race and be successful, we must run the race with patience (Hebrews 12:1). Patience is of primary importance to the development of spiritual maturity and is thus the unique objective of the testing of our faith in the midst of trials (James 1:3). It is when we taste success in our Christian experience by the implementation of faith, virtue, knowledge and temperance that the trials come to test the genuineness of our commitment. Patience, which is the commitment to be faithful no matter what, reveals the difference between those who are serious about godliness and those who are not.

Adding Godliness to Your Patience

Up to this point, the character qualities in this list have been internal. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance and patience are all developed within the believer's heart and mind. Now the list turns outward and the remaining three character qualities express the external results of this internal construction of the life.

2 Peter asks in chapter three verse eleven, *what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* The manner of a person is the definition of what he has become on the inside. Biblical conversation is a non-verbal communication which reveals to those around us the manner of a person we are. Godliness is a public display of reverence and respect for God by a strict adherence to the things which please Him.

Godliness demonstrates to others what we think of God. It shows that we are in awe of Him, being totally overwhelmed with who He is and of what He is capable. It shows that we believe everything He tells us about Himself, that He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Holy, Righteous, and Eternal. It shows that we have turned our hearts completely over to Him and that we have an undaunted faith in His promises. It shows that we have a fearful respect for His commandments and are determined to obey Him with every ounce of effort we can muster. It shows that we would not think of being disloyal to Him, but are determined to live absolutely according to all those things which please Him and Him alone.

Too many Christians today live as undisciplined adolescents who ungratefully insist upon being given more and more from their divine parent, throwing at him the unthankful demand: "If you love me, you will let me do and have what I want." Godliness, by contrast proclaims to the world, "I am so grateful to God for what He has done for me, it is the objective of my life to do only what He wants me to do."

Adding Brotherly Kindness To Your Godliness

The term brotherly kindness is translated from the Greek word philadelphia.

Philadelphia implies a non-romantic, but close and intimate relationship between two people. Proverbs 18:24 says that there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. It is in this sense that brotherly kindness consists of a filial attachment experienced by two people who are not necessarily blood relatives.

Brotherly kindness is actually a divine concept. It is something which believers learn directly from God. He instructs us that we are to express brotherly kindness as an extension of agape love particularly in our relationships with other members of the body of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:9). It is something that is to be expressed toward all the brethren and something that should be increasing constantly (1 Thessalonians 4:10).

Brotherly kindness is a positive and genuine personal involvement with other believers, expressed with respect and humility. We learn this from the context in which it is found in Romans 12:9-10. Here we are told to *let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.* There is to be no pretending, no unethical behavior between believers. Instead, there is to be a concerted effort to defer, with humility, to the welfare and promotion of others above and before self.

Adding Charity To Your Brotherly Kindness

Charity is the pinnacle of spiritual maturity. Among faith, hope and charity, charity is the greatest (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is the supreme quality of God that moved Him to send His Son and provide salvation for mankind (Romans 5:8). It is the identifying quality of those who belong to Jesus Christ (John 13:35).

We tend to define our human love in terms of the emotions we experience when we become infatuated with someone. But the agape love of the Bible is not a feeling; it is a choice – something we decide to do, as opposed to something we can't help feeling.

Charity is a commitment to give oneself for others. God loved the world and gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Jesus Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2). So husbands are to love their wives and give themselves sacrificially for their welfare (Ephesians 5:25); and Christians in general ought to be laying down their lives for one another as an expression of divine love (1 John 3:16).

Charity is the ultimate behavior that reflects the nature of God and is thus the substance of a godly life.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also

to love one another.

1 John 4:7-11

While romantic love consists of the discovery of one person to whom we choose to commit ourselves for a lifetime, Christian charity involves a commitment to consider all people to have value and to be worthy of my devotion and sacrifice on their behalf. Charity is the sacrifice of self to the cause of Christ, to the ministry of reconciliation, to the demonstration of the nature of God so that others might know what He is really like by way of our testimony.

Conclusion

In Summary:

Faith is a commitment to be loyal to God.

Virtue is a commitment to quality control.

Knowledge is a commitment to learn the truth.

Temperance is a commitment to a disciplined life based on yieldedness to the Holy Spirit.

Patience is a commitment to stick to this disciplined life regardless of what happens.

Godliness is the manner of person I become because of the preceding commitment. It is a manner of life by which I demonstrate what I really think about God.

Brotherly Kindness is a bonding with others who are walking the same path.

Charity is the sacrifice of self to the cause of Christ.

These are the necessary ingredients for fruitfulness in the Christian life. 2 Peter 1:8 says, *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.* Without them, we will never achieve what God desires for us. *But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins* (verse 9).

So God has given a process by which we can build these things into the structure of our lives. There is a prescribed order in which it is to be done. And I believe it is a process that needs to be repeated over and over again. Our faith can always be stronger (Luke 17:5). There are always more virtuous adjectives that can be added to our lives. There is

an inexhaustible amount of knowledge to be gleaned from the Word of God. Spiritual discipline requires constant exercise. And who ever has enough patience? Godliness should continually increase in our lives; and there is no limit to our capacity for brotherly kindness and charity if we are building on our faith as God directs us to do.

In 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul said, *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. **But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*** What sound advice. We ought to be building on the foundation of our faith. But how we build is very important. God has given us a blueprint for doing so in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Seems like a good plan to follow. 