

“Giving All Diligence”

Introduction. Everyone wants to be a success, and most people define success as the attainment of popularity or profit. The most important success, though, is spiritual success. Spiritual success is found in growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). The way to grow in part is found in 2 Peter 1:5-11. Man is a free moral agent. God’s calling and election is done through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). It is our choice to initially obey, and our choice to shore up that calling.

Peter said that we should “give all diligence” or “act with great zeal or effort; to earnestly work” to add these virtues. We are to give all of our interest to it and make every effort to muster every ounce we can to cultivating these virtues. Growing strong in Christ does not happen overnight, nor does it happen accidentally or naturally. It requires time, patience and hard work.

Peter also stated in 2 Peter 1:5 and implies in the rest of the verses that we are to “add” each virtue to another. Originally, the word meant to “found and support a chorus, to lead a choir, to keep in tune.” It then came to mean to “supply or provide.” This word therefore suggests the idea of each virtue working in harmony with the others to produce an overall effect. They must all be developed in conjunction with each other. We cannot be selective and pick the ones we like and leave others behind.

Many Christians are weak and some fall away because they fail to secure their faith by adding these virtues to their lives. Some of us may have been children of God for a number of years. Unless we continue to grow, we are simply repeating the first year over and over again.

I. ***Growing In The Virtues***

A. Faith.

1. This is the foundation that we build upon (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 5:1). This is a loyalty not only to faithful doctrine, but also faithfulness (Jude 3, 5; Luke 7:9).
2. This is the inducement that leads us to do the works of God (2 Corinthians 5:7; James 2:22). Unless our faith moves us to obey, it is useless.
3. Our faith must grow (2 Thessalonians 1:3)! Where does one acquire faith (Romans 10:17)? This is why Bible study is so important to one’s growth. It builds a loyalty to God and His teaching.

B. Virtue.

1. This word, also translated as “moral excellence,” means a “virtuous course of thought, feeling and action.” At one time, it was used of the ability to perform heroic deeds, including conducting one’s life. True virtue requires great energy and boldness.

2. Why do you think we spend so much time dealing with divorce and remarriage, immodest dress, smoking, social drinking, mixed swimming, cursing, gambling and all kinds of ungodly sins? Because we must climb above these to be godly (Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 2:9). We must have heroism to conduct our lives with goodness.

C. Knowledge.

1. Many Christians fail because they they lack knowledge of God's will (Hosea 4:6; 1 Peter 2:2). This, in turn, causes them to not be strong. How can we know right from wrong, truth from error without knowledge of the Bible?
2. When we are lacking in our knowledge of the scriptures, we open ourselves up to being led astray (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 3:18).
3. Although our knowledge of Jesus Christ as our Lord should be of extreme value (Philippians 3:8), knowledge alone puffs up (1 Corinthians 8:1). Therefore, we must add more in order to fulfill the Lord's expectations.

D. Temperance.

1. Temperance, or self-control, is self-discipline. We need to be constantly in control of our thoughts, tongue, temper and actions. Without self-control, one slips dangerously close to sin (James 1:14).
2. If Paul, the great apostle who wrote half of our New Testament, felt as if he needed self-control, I would do well to heed the warning also (1 Corinthians 9:25-27; 10:13).
3. Our society is one of instant gratification. We must learn to control ourselves or hold ourselves in so we can avoid sin. Everything in our lives should be confined within their proper limits.

E. Patience.

1. Patience, or perseverance, is a "bearing up under trials." Patience involves more than just temper. It involves endurance and perseverance (Hebrews 10:35-39). Patience is needed to endure the problems one will face in life (James 1:3-4; 5:11; Luke 8:15).
2. We do not always know why suffering and afflictions come, but we do not need to be blaming and turning away from God. He is the only one who can help (James 1:13).
3. We need to be followers of those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12).

F. Godliness.

1. Godliness is piety, respect and reverence for God. It is a disposition that does what is pleasing toward God. Our society is becoming more godless and immoral, but godliness is always profitable (1 Timothy 4:8; 6:6-7).

2. Right and wrong are not determined by society under a given situation, but rather by absolute rules given by God (John 8:32; 2 Peter 3:11). One example would be that lying is always wrong. "Situation ethics" says that lying is acceptable sometimes.

G. Brotherly kindness.

1. The knowledge of God emanates into love for other Christians (1 John 4:7-20). Brotherly kindness denotes the warmth of affection that should characterize Christians. We should feel nearness, like that of a family, for others in Christ.
2. Love expresses itself in kindness (Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22). If we "let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1), then we will grow together and go to heaven together.

H. Charity.

1. Love is the queen of the virtues (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13), denoting self-sacrificing action in behalf of another. This love flows from God who is Himself love (1 John 4:8) and who reaches out to the world (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16). Godly people who are "partakers of the divine nature" must abound in love.
2. However, this love is not to be interpreted as merely a warm and pleasant feeling (2 John 6). True love demands that we follow God's commandments.

II. ***The Results Of Our Growth***

A. Failure to grow in this knowledge results in spiritual "myopia" and "amnesia."

1. In the New Testament "blind" is used in a metaphorical sense (cf. John 9:39-41). Spiritual blindness can come from being spiritually "nearsighted."
 - a) Such a defect of vision leads one to forget the obligation which grows out of the fact that a system has been devised to purify the heart.
 - b) The ultimate objective of being a Christian is to become like Christ (Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:9-11).
2. Failure to grow is an indication that we forgot why we were redeemed by the blood of Christ in the first place (1 Peter 1:18-19).
 - a) By putting redemption and forgiveness in apposition to each other, Paul teaches that the central feature of redemption is the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).
 - b) When we bear spiritual fruit (cf. Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:12-14), God is glorified (John 15:8).

B. We will never fall.

1. This does not mean we will never sin (1 John 1:8-10).

a) "Fall" means "to fall into misery, become wretched; cf. the loss of salvation."

b) We will not fall short of salvation. Said another way, we will certainly be saved.

2. This is not an absolute statement. It is only true if we are "giving all diligence" to grow in Christ and thereby "making our calling and election sure."

C. An entrance into the "everlasting kingdom" will be abundantly supplied.

1. This "everlasting kingdom" is His heavenly kingdom (2 Timothy 4:18).

2. What is meant by the idea of an "abundant entrance"?

a) Bengel wrote, "You may be able to enter, not as having escaped from a shipwreck, or from fire, but as it were in triumph."

b) By possessing these eight virtues, we will be able to live victoriously in this life and joyously anticipate what lies ahead (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Conclusion. God calls us to walk down a path that naturally we would not have taken. My natural impulse is not to go out and climb on top of a 30 foot building. The Lord calls us to the highest attainments possible. Let's all make sure that we earnestly strive for that goal.