



SERMON QUESTIONS

2 Peter 1: 5-8, Part 2 | January 29, 2017

GATHERING

1. We are a month into 2017. How are your resolutions doing?
 2. Most of us are always working on some area of our lives. What are you focusing on now, financial, physical, spiritual, intellectual, professional, social, etc?
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LOOKING AT THE TEXT

In these verses, Peter is telling us how to step into the abundant life that can be ours in Jesus. He has already told us that he wants us to have grace and peace and that God has already given us everything we need for a God-centered life through our relationship with Jesus. But how do we grow our relationship with God? Peter uses a rhetorical device of the Greco-Roman culture, a ladder of virtue. In the secular world this would be a way of self-improvement. But Peter uses it as a way of describing how we cooperate with God to become like Jesus.

God has given all people a will and a spirit that is often referred to as "the heart." We also have a body through which we experience the world of events and emotions. When we don't have God's Spirit in us we are more or less controlled by our body and our mind and will bend to its desires. We rationalize or justify doing what we want. Since these desires have no place for God they become evil actions and lead to corruption. Our selfishness brings death to our lives.

But God has changed us on the inside. He has given us everything we need for new life and God-centeredness. This transformation allows our heart to control our emotions and body as we continue to seek God and allow him to work in us.

In 2 Peter that transformation is worked out by adding goodness to our faith and knowledge to our goodness. We are also to add self-control and perseverance.

1. What do you remember from last week's teaching about how these things – knowledge, self-control, perseverance --work together in us? How do you think God works through us as we try to pay attention to this in our lives?
2. By persevering we are committing to the process of obeying what God reveals as we learn more about him. We now have self-control that we did not once have because of his presence in us. To these traits we are to add godliness. This is the same word use in verse 3 (godly life). **How do we continue to add a God centered life to our spiritual growth? What are the areas of your life that you think you have allowed God to enter? What part of your life are you hesitant to give over?**
3. The last two words both mean love and are often synonyms. But since they are side by side Peter must be drawing a distinction. The first word, translated "mutual affection" is "*philadelphia*" – brotherly love. The second word is *agape* love for all. We are to add to our faith love for others in the body of Christ as well as love for the wider world. **Which do you think comes more naturally to you, loving Christians for non-Christians? How are they different?**
4. These words remind us that our spiritual life is not only about us. We are being made like Jesus for the sake of others. **What are some tangible ways you can add "mutual affection" or love for the body of Christ to your life?**
5. Our growth does not end with loving people like us or people in the church. God's love is expansive. He loved the world so much that he gave his Son (John 3). **How has God begun to awaken your heart to people unlike you? Have you ever had the chance to meet people in a completely different culture? Was it hard to love them? How do we "add" love like this to our lives?**

FURTHER APPLICATION.

Peter tells us that if we add these traits in increasing measure they will keep us from being "ineffective and unproductive" in our relationship with God. The first word mean "idle" and the second "unfruitful." So if we add these things to our lives we will grow more fruit, or Christ likeness, and we will be out there doing good. If you were to rate your own spiritual life does it feel idle or empty or does it feel full and fruitful?

Of these traits – goodness (a commitment to God's desire for you), knowledge, self control, perseverance, God-centeredness in every area of life, love for those in the church and love for those in the wider world – which is the next step for you? Where have you made progress?