

Excellent Qualities

II Peter 1:5-9

5/20/07

Intro

Last week we read that God's divine power has granted everything we need for life and godliness. Peter also went on to say that God has granted to us precious and magnificent promises so that by them, we might become partakers of His nature.

In other words, He has provided everything we need to change so that we have His character in our hearts and in how we live our lives.

He then list the qualities that God wants to see in our lives. If these qualities are ours, and increasing measure, they will make us spiritually fruitful and useful to God's purposes in our lives.

There are many books that spell out the qualities that will make us successful, and they may work to bring success by the world's standards, but no list is better than this one for bringing the godly change in our lives that God has set before us as His definition of spiritual excellence.

**These are qualities that God desires to see in us
and has given all we need to live.**

I. Spiritual Excellence Requires Diligence

- 'Diligence' means here to have a sense of urgency and importance in your spiritual life.
- 'Excellence' doesn't have an immediate English word, but means 'spiritual excellence in action.'

A. Rely on God's provision

- This is definition of faith. Peter says that it is the foundation of all other qualities that God desires.
- If God has provided everything we need for life and godliness, then faith relies on what God provides.
- It's difficult to be anointed by the Holy Spirit without the Holy Spirit.

Illus – I have learned that I have to rely on God's help in giving a message and I have to humble myself and ask for God's help every time I teach.

- There are some great scriptures that help us understand what Peter is writing.

Psalm 73:25-26, 28 Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever... But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.

Philippians 4:13-14, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Illus – There is a worship song that captures this beautifully...

"In Christ Alone" I place my trust, and find my glory in the power of the cross. In every victory let it be said of me My source of strength, my source of hope is Christ alone.

- God's power is even perfected in weakness.

Illus – I had to teach at a retreat once after I had been seasick for hours, and the temperature was in the 100's.

Psalm 127:1-2, Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

B. Faith brings spiritual excellence

- The way these words are constructed in the Greek language suggests that faith is the foundation on which we are to build spiritual excellence.
- Peter knows from personal experience. This was a difficult lesson for Peter to learn. Much of what we see from Peter in the gospels shows that Peter relied on his own strength in the beginning.

Illus – Peter had been fishing all night and caught nothing, and then the Lord asked him to put down his nets in the middle of the morning.

When they came to arrest Jesus, it was Peter who took out his sword and lopped off Malchus' ear.

It was Peter who said he would stand by the Lord even to death and then ended up saying he didn't know the Lord even with cursing.

But it was also Peter, under the power of the Holy Spirit who stood up in the middle of Jerusalem and spoke of the gospel of Christ to a crowd of thousands.

Colossians 3:17, 23 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father... Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

C. Supply spiritual knowledge

- This is experiential real knowledge we must have or we will struggle in spiritual defeat.
- There are two ways we can learn what we need for life; we can learn through our own experience, or we can learn through others.
- Paul wrote that we learn from Israel's history.

I Corinthians 10:11, Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

- Peter explains that he is writing for our good.

II Peter 1:13-15, I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

Illus – Peter had a lot of experience to learn from... When he wrote that must be diligent in prayer, could he have in his mind when he fell asleep in the garden?

When he said do not return evil for evil, was he thinking about when he cut off Malchus' ear?

When he wrote that must be ready to give an answer for our hope, could he be thinking about when he denied the Lord to a young girl on a cold morning?

- Jesus once confronted some lawyers...

Luke 11:52, Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.

- Jesus Himself is the key to the knowledge we need for life.

II. Seek the More Excellent Way

A. Supply self control

- It means letting your godliness control your worldliness.
- It also means letting your godliness control your emotions.

Psalm 119:11, Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.

- If we hide God's Word in our heart, then it's there to remind us of the "more excellent way."
- Self control is founded on knowledge because it is spiritual experience that tells us that if we allow our flesh or our emotions to go unchecked, it will mean much trouble.

I Corinthians 9:26-27, Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Illus – We need to set a guard over our words, but first we need a guard over our emotions and over our flesh.

B. Persevere in godliness

- The idea from the Greek is joyful persevering, not mournful or trying to draw attention to ourselves.

Illus – The priests in the Old Testament were not allowed to wear wool under garments, then had to be linen next to their body. They were not to suffer in their ministry.

James 1:2-4, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Illus – There is a great testimony of God’s faithfulness when you see someone going through a major trial in the confidence of the Lord.

For me, that example is my mom. I will never forget seeing her joke with the doctors while in the fight of her life with cancer.

C. Love your brother

- The idea is to bear one another’s burdens.
- There is a love that we have for our blood brothers that runs very deep. “Blood is thicker than water,” as the saying goes. But there is a love that runs deeper still because of the common bond we have in Christ.

Proverbs 18:24, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Illus – I remember a pastor friend of mine I saw ministering to a young man that had a spiked Mohawk, leather coat, chains, etc. As he talked to him he just kept stroking his head and loved him to Christ.

Illus – Another pastor told of a midweek service when he was teaching and there sat a young man with the spiked Mohawk and chains. Next to him sat a grandma with a sweater drooped behind her. At one point she needed the sweater on her shoulders and the man put his arm around her to help her.

That is the love of Christ giving a common love for each other.