

Choose the Pathway to Freedom in Christ

Lesson #7

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:5-10 *“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;”*

Introduction:

A Ripe Christian Character

A ripe Christian character is simply a life in which all Christian virtues and graces have become fixed and solidified into permanence as established habits. It costs no struggle to do right, because what has been done so long, under the influence of grace in the heart, has become part of the regenerated nature. The bird sings not to be heard but because the song is in its heart, and must be expressed. It sings just as sweetly in the depths of the wood with no ear to listen, as by the crowded thoroughfare. Beethoven did not sing for fame, but to give utterance to the glorious music that filled his soul. The face of Moses did not shine to convince the people of his holiness, but because he had dwelt so long in the presence of God that it could not but shine. Truest, ripest Christian life flows out of a full heart--a heart so filled with Christ that it requires no effort to live well, and to scatter the sweetness of grace and love.

It must be remembered, however, that all goodness in living begins first obeying rules, in keeping commandments. Mozart and Mendelssohn began with running scales and striking chords, and with painful finger-exercises the noblest Christian began with the simplest obedience. The way to become skillful is to do things over and over until we can do them perfectly, and without thought or effort. The way to become able to do great things, is to do our little things with endless repetition, and with increasing dexterity and carefulness. The

way to grow into Christ-likeness of character, is to watch ourselves in the minutest things of thought and word and act, until our powers are trained to go almost without watching in the lines of moral right and holy beauty. To become prayerful, we must learn to pray by the clock, at fixed times. It is fine ideal talk to say that our devotions should be like the bird's song, warbling out anywhere and at any time with sweet unrestraint; but in plain truth, to depend upon such impulses as guides to praying, would soon lead to no praying at all. This may do for heavenly life; but we have not gotten into heaven yet, and until we do we need to pray by habit. So of all religious life. We only grow into patience by being as patient as we can, daily and hourly, and in smallest matters, ever learning to be more and more patient until we reach the highest possible culture in that line. We can only become unselfish wherever we have an opportunity, until our life grows into the permanent beauty of unselfishness. We can only grow better by striving ever to be better than we already are, and by climbing step by step toward the radiant heights of excellence. -- Miller – From "Present Day Parables" by J. Wilbur Chapman

Transitional Statement:

Just as a child goes through predictable growth patterns from those of early infancy on into puberty, the Christians experiences similar patterns of growth. Spirituality requires a great deal of effort and has its own growing pains.

Lesson:

I. Knowledge

- A. John 8:31-32 *“...If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*
- B. John 4:24 *“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*
- C. 2 Peter 3:18 *“...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”*
- D. 2 Timothy 2:15 *“Be diligent (Study) to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”*
- E. Hebrews 5:11-14 *“Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”*
- F. Proverbs 23:12 *“Apply your heart to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge.”*

II. Obedience

- A. Obedience is a measure of our love
 - 1. John 15:10 *“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love”*
 - 2. John 14:15 *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”*
- B. Obedience is a measure of our faith
 - 1. John 6:66-69 *“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve,*

"You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

C. Obedience is a measure of our understanding

1. Example of looking at a woman lustfully

Matthew 5:28 *"...but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

2. Forgiving as we want to be forgiven

Matthew 6:14-15 *"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."*

3. Making kingdom priority the guiding principles of our lives

Matthew 6:33 *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

D. Obedience is a measure of our certainty

1. Acts 4:19-20 *"But Peter and John answered and said to them, " Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

E. Obedience is a measure of our churches

1. 7 churches of Asia in Revelation

III. Conscience

A. Serving God only from knowledge and obedience leads to legalism...like the older brother of Luke 15.

B. Serving God with all of hearts must be the benchmark for every believer

C. Indications that we are growing at the conscience level

1. Kingdom business takes priority in our lives

2. Willing to give all we have to see kingdom business done Matt 19:16-22

3. With a consuming hunger for God

4. When our failed attempts are understood as hindrances to kingdom purposes
5. When our achievements are seen as victories of God in His kingdom
6. When pleasing God and fulfilling His will take first thought in our minds.

D. Promoting service from the core.

1. Regular evaluations of our motive
 - a. With prayer and fasting

IV. Discipline

- A. Discipline here is the effort we make at shaping our lives after God's will
- B. Listening to God through His word and prayer come first
- C. With humility and full surrender close behind
- D. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27 *"...I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."*
- E. 2 Corinthians 10:5 *"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,"*

V. Devotion

- A. Matthew 22:37 *"And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'*
- B. Old Testament burnt offerings
- C. 1 Corinthians 7:35 *"This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord."*

VI. Surrender

- A. The Apostle Paul's life
 1. His choice to give up all that he was
 2. To go the Lord's way at all costs
- B. Matthew 16:24 *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."*

VII. Intimacy

- A. Our God desires a deep relationship with us. Like Enoch who walked with God.
- B. God desires our hearts
- C. He wants our deep love
- D. He wants to be the object of our affections.

Conclusion:

Galatians 5:1

1 Walk by the Spirit

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

John 8:36

36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."