

Heart of Discipleship



4. A Passion for Being Equipped 2 (2 Peter 1:1-11)

This is the fourth sermon in our series *Heart of Discipleship* and in it we have seen that we are all called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is not an optional extra. Baptism is a mark of that discipleship because it is a statement that we have repented: I am not going to go my way but I am going to walk God's way. *I have decided to follow Jesus - no turning back!* We then saw that the cost of going God's way, of following Jesus is very costly because He wants our whole allegiance.

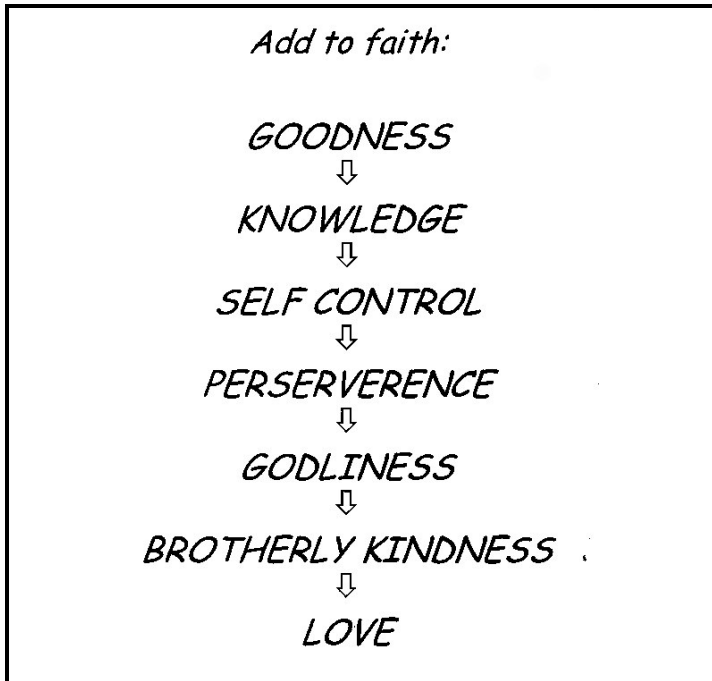
It's the sort of thing that makes us feel inadequate but last week we started to explore this lovely passage in Peter's second letter we found that God has equipped us for **3** *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.* We looked last week at this great truth. We have everything we need for life and godliness. We found too that through God's grace we have been given precious promises that we *may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.* We have become part of God's family, we are indwelt by His Spirit - partakers of the divine nature - so that we can avoid the corruption of the world - to live holy lives as Peter reminds us in 1 Pet 1: **15** *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

We then found that this equipping process involved adding to our faith. It was our faith that started us on the road of salvation. We accepted God's offer of forgiveness and eternal life by faith. But to continue in our walk as disciples and to protect us from lack of assurance and falling away from Christ, we need to add to our faith and this week we are going to look at the qualities that we need to add if we are to be healthy growing and assured disciples. Let's read them again in verses 5 to 8:

5 *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. . 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We start with faith and we add. The suggestion is that if we possess all seven qualities then we will be effective and productive in our walk with God. So let's have a look at them and see what they involve.

Does it add up?



So let's start with faith



You'll remember last week the quote from Moffatt ***"The Christian experience is an initial spasm followed by a chronic inertia"***. As I said I feel there is a lot of truth in this statement. I've seen too many situations where Christians have failed to achieve their potential in Christ. We are encourage here to add to our faith to make us more effective and productive believers and we have a God who has equipped us to do it!



add to your faith goodness;

The Greek word here means virtue or excellence: moral excellence. Do we want to honour God? Then we need to have the highest standard of moral excellence. It's the logical end of our faith. Through faith, God equips us to achieve it. We may fall, yes, but that doesn't take away from the fact that God has called us to the highest standards of integrity which He equips us for.

This week the Lord spoke to Rhiannon and myself about integrity. It arose out of our Alpha meeting. How do we convince good moral non-Christians - and most people in Swaffham view themselves as honest and peace-loving citizens - that they need a Saviour? We can talk all about sin but then they turn around and compare themselves to the Christians they know and see no difference.

I know that it is the Holy Spirit that convinces people of sin, but it is no testimony to His presence in our lives if we are not people of exceptional moral excellence. And because He's in our lives we have no excuse. He's the Holy Spirit - Holy. We need to let Him bring holiness into our lives - more on that next week.

This is just the first of our characteristics and you may already see we have an issue here. We may be people of integrity. But there are plenty of non-Christians that are too. How do we reach them? By being a people who reflect the integrity of Christ in our lives. One of the major problems with the Christian faith in Britain is that we lack that integrity and you'll see how we go through this interconnected list that this is not the last time this issue will come up.



and to goodness, knowledge;

As we said last week the word knowledge is the Greek word *epignosis* which means *to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, know well*" (Thayer). One commentator Mark Copeland said that Peter is talking about growing in a FULL AND PERSONAL knowledge of Jesus Christ! The New Living Translation puts verse 5 this way *So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better.*

How would a life of moral excellence lead to knowing God better? Because in living a life worthy of our Lord, we are reliant on His presence and power. As we have already said, we cannot live lives of moral excellence without letting the Holy Spirit work sanctification in our lives and we can only do that by walking close to God.

How close is our walk with our God this morning? This passage implies that those that walk close to God live exemplary lives. It's not my effort that produces integrity, but walking close to God and letting His power transform my life.



and to knowledge, self-control;

The older translations put this word as temperance. Don't confuse this with the old Temperance movement that preached abstinence from alcohol. The Greek word here is *egkrateia* which just means self control - the virtue of controlling one's passions and desires. Rhiannon and I went to a very interesting session at Michael's school last week. It was for a presentations of the school's personal safety programme for their pupils which was rather interesting. One of the exercises they showed us were a series of emotions and we were asked what were good and bad emotions and listed were things such as; *kind, anger, anxiety, nervousness; love*. Children will see these emotions as either good or bad, but actually all of them can be either good or bad according to what we do with them. This is what self-control is all about.

Are we in control of our passions and desires or do we let them control us: or worse, cloud our good judgement? In the end, people who are unable to control themselves are people who operate on whims. A person who lacks self-control will run with their emotions rather than try to discern what is right. We are called to add moral excellence

to our faith and that means that we are people that put the right emotion in the right place.

By that I don't mean that we should necessarily be very "English" - stiff upper lip and all that. Self control is not being devoid of emotion but using our emotions to honour God. Romans 12 :14 helps us here *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another.* That also includes having the same passion and desire for God which leads us to do passionate things. Remember that Jesus was a man who showed anger and passion as He cleansed the temple. God wants us to be people who are passionate but that our passions are under His control, because His control is self-control.

That naturally takes us to the next item because people who lack self-control are ones who easily fall away. "They run with the hares and hunt with the hounds". We aren't called to that.



Perseverance

and to self-control, perseverance;

*Being persistent in the pursuit of worthy objectives despite difficulty and opposition and
Being patient and willing to try again when confronted with delays, mistakes or failures*

In our modern society that demands instant everything, this is a word that people understand little. Instant soup, fast food, instant cameras, instant messages, email or whatever don't encourage us to stick at things when there are other things we can have straight away. And we hate waiting don't we. We hate waiting in the doctors or at hospital - they don't call us patients for nothing you know! *If at first you don't succeed - give up!*

However, perseverance is something that is a very Christian characteristic. God does things in His time and we need to learn His rhythm of life. We may want that relative or friend to come and we sometimes get impatient with God. but He does things in His time. So this is an encouragement to keep praying because the prayer of a righteous man avails much.

We can also see perseverance as something that should show in our lives when we fail or things don't go as planned. That can be true in our walk with Christ. We can and do fail as we try to live up to God's high standards of moral excellence or failing to control ourselves - or in our personal relationship with God. The temptation to give up is high, but remember, we are called to persevere and God has equipped us, by His Spirit to do that.

However the Greek *hupomone* isn't just about persevering but *in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings (Strong)* We may not suffer physical persecution but we go through many difficult and dark times in life. Do we fold, do we blame God? or do we prove God in adversity. I said in the healing seminar last week that some of the most spiritual people I know are those that have had long term health issues in their lives and some of the most shallow have been those that chase after the latest miracles. Perseverance is important because it is through the

dark times in our lives (which inevitably come as part of life) we prove God's grace as we persevere.



and to perseverance, godliness;

Having said what I have about perseverance, the next item that adds on to perseverance is godliness. By persevering we are drawn close to God and in turn that produces godliness. What do we mean by godliness? It's the Greek word eusebeia which means reverence or respect and that is an attitude towards God rather and things we do. We prove God's grace and faithfulness as we persevere.

Godliness is therefore living lives that revere God. It's so easy to associate reverence with worship. We sometimes think that is so important, but we show our reverence for our God in the way we live.



and to godliness, brotherly kindness;

Peter does an interesting thing here. Rather than being like John and go on to talking about loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, he uses the term philadelphia which means love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love or the love which Christians cherish for each other as being part of the family of God. What does a reverence of God lead to, a respect for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

As I have said in the past, the measure of respect and love for one another is a measure of our godliness - how much we revere God and have the desire to obey Him. It's the logical end. If we love God, then we do His will which is to love one another.

I was saying earlier how in this world we need to be distinctive people and in being distinctive, those without Christ will long after our distinctiveness. But too often churches are anything but safe, loving environments. They can be dangerous places. Some of the worst personal hurts can be wrought at the hands of fellow believers. I'm sure you have come across people who once ran well but have become discouraged by their treatment by God's people.

People in the world look at churches and what do they see? Do they see people who love and care for one another - or do they see stories of hurt and unforgiveness? I have been encouraged by the way we as a church have welcomed newcomers over the last two years. But it doesn't stop there. Maybe you've hurt or been hurt by someone in this church or another. Maybe it has blighted your faith. That's not what God desires of you. In the end we follow Christ, not the Baptists, or the Minister, or the example of our church family. If we have reverence for Him, then we need to live a life worthy of Him and that life includes how we deal with our church family.

Perhaps this is a time this morning that we repair broken relationships. Perhaps it is time to forgive and make up differences. Perhaps it's a time if we have been discouraged to come before God in reverence to Him and commit ourselves afresh to

His service this morning. And service always mean serving one another as we serve Christ.



and to brotherly kindness, love

These are hard lessons but we come to the end of our list and the top of it. The last thing we add is the logical end of it all. it's the point of all leads to and that's love. In the end it sums up the lot. We have moral integrity because we love God, as we know God we love Him, as we understand God we understand the need to control ourselves, as we are in control we know we need to persevere in following the one we love, we have reverence for the one we love, we love our Christian family because we love God. Love is the root of it all. And what is that love? 1 John 4:10 *10 This is love : not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.* What is love -being prepared to die for our Lord and for those in our Christian family. We give our all for them.

But in Peter separating that from brotherly kindness is significant because in all our dealings with God, our church family and the world, love should be the characteristic of our lives. And so often we struggle with it don't we. But this is the distinctive that disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are called to . This is what Jesus called to in Luke Chapter 14. This is what He lived and this is what we are called to and God means that we live it - a life of love. And has Peter says so clearly in this chapter - it's what we are called to . That is the distinctive. That is what should make us different from the world.

In the first two centuries the church rarely had a public face. There were no church buildings. There was no organised evangelism. Christianity was illegal. So how did people become Christians? People looked at Christians and were fascinated by the people they found. They lived a different way. They loved and it showed.

We live in a world where Christ is not physically present. How can people know He is alive? Well they could do an Alpha course and argue the historic evidence. But that isn't the way that most people become Christians. They find out that Jesus is alive because they see Him alive in His people.

That's the distinctive of the disciples of Jesus Christ. People see Him in the lives of His disciples and they follow. Do they see Jesus in you? Are people drawn to you because of your love and godliness?

Or do they see just another citizen of Swaffham? That is the challenge God brings to us this morning. This is not an unachievable aim, but is God's will for us and He equips us.

Let me finish on a picture I gave you last week. To do a job, you need the right equipment. That's true. But to make that equipment effective, you have to use it. Let's be people that take the equipment and use it.

Let's pray.

Father, than You that you have given us everything we need for life and godliness. As you have challenged us this morning, please help us to continue to add to our faith goodness, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love so that we will be people that reflect the nature of Christ. We pray that you will

shape and mould us to be the people that You want us to be so that we will grow in you and bring glory to your Holy name.

For Jesus' sake

Amen



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10/10/04
Scripture Quotes NIV*