

**Text: II Peter 1:5-8 (Pew Bible pg.1204)**

**Title: “Holy Habits”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Before I get started this morning I want to remind you of our Prayer Conference with Dr. Gary Miller next Sunday evening at 5pm in Great Room. The great preacher Warren Wiersbe once said, “When a church ceases to depend on prayer, God ceases to bless its ministry.” We are rebuilding our prayer ministry and I’d like for you to be part of it. So join us.

Turn with me to II Peter 1:5-8. I’m beginning a series of messages this morning designed to challenge us about making progress in our spiritual lives. I’m sure that this early in the new year many of you are thinking about making progress in different parts of your life ... physically, financially, family or whatever. But do you have plans for your spiritual progress? Most of the time, progress happens as we build in a new set of habits in our lives. If you are planning for physical progress it will likely include establishing new habits, like setting aside time to exercise or eating healthier foods or spending more time with your family. And the same thing is true spiritually.

Someone has observed that the things we do in life are like seeds that are sown. “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” We’ll spend some time together exploring what the Bible says about our spiritual progress. And we’ll start here in II Peter 1:5-8. Read text.

**ILLUSTRATION** – My grandson Cooper is big into Legos these days. And he got some really cool Lego sets for Christmas. This one is “Super Hero Iron Man Mansion.” And there are a couple of things to build. Everything needed to make this helicopter was in a bag like this. And there’s an instruction booklet like this. And it shows you how to put the pieces together so it comes out looking like this helicopter. Now everything is included, but there is some assembly required. You know some things you buy come in a box that is marked “Some Assembly Required.” Well this little set should be marked “Much Assembly Required.” But actually, that’s part of the fun of it.

Now when we put our trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, He gives us this new life. The Holy Spirit comes to live within us as the guarantee that all the pieces are there to construct a life that looks like Jesus. That’s the goal. We know that from the preceding verses.

**2 Peter 1:3 - 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.**

Everything we need for life and godliness is found in our relationship with ... the knowledge of ... Jesus Christ. And on top of that God has “given us” something else:

**2 Peter 1:4 - Through these (God’s glory and goodness) he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature (the holiness of God and the character of Jesus) and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.**

You see God want us to share in His divine nature ... His holiness. That's His design when He saves us through Jesus Christ. And He wants us to escape the corruption that is in the world (and there is so much corruption in our world). And so He has given us everything we need for life and godliness. He has given us certain "great and precious promises" that supply everything we need for our spiritual progress. But God intends for us to work with Him toward our spiritual progress. Do you see the word "participate" in v.4? It means to "partner with." So that's why it says...

**2 Peter 1:5 - For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith...**

**ILLUSTRATION** – After Christmas my grandson Cooper and his dad had a Lego Night. They sat together and built stuff like this. When God gives us the gift of eternal life He intends to build us into the character of His Son Jesus, and He will do that as we cooperate with Him.

So as we think about spiritual progress please notice that...

**1. THERE'S A PRICE TO BE PAID FOR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS (2 Peter 1:5a).**

**2 Peter 1:5 - For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith...**

So for this reason ... in light of the fact that God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness ... what are we to do?

**v.5 – "make every effort..."** – Now remember that effort has nothing to do with our salvation, but it has everything to do with our spiritual growth into the likeness of Christ. God in His grace is not opposed to *effort* in spiritual growth; He is opposed to *earning*. As you strive toward spiritual progress you can't earn any more of God's love. God is opposed to earning, but not effort. And that's what He calls us to. We're talking here about diligence and vigilance toward spiritual progress.

**v.5 – "make every effort to add to your faith..."** - the word "add" means to pay the price to enrich or enhance something. Now we cannot add anything to our salvation. We can only work out what God has already worked in. The point is that there is a price to be paid in doing that.

There's no progress in any area of our lives if we are not willing to pay the price. If your goal is to progress physically to where you can run a 10K race, you're foolish to think you can do it without paying the price of training. If your goal is to build a healthy retirement income for the future, for most of us it's foolish to think we can do it without paying the price today. If your goal is be the very best mom or dad you can be, you'll not accomplish that without paying the price of spending quality time with your children. And if your goal is to make progress spiritually, you have to be willing to pay the price.

So there's a price to be paid for spiritual progress. And many of us are not willing to pay the price because we do not see the value in spiritual progress. We're saved, and that's enough. But let me just show you the next thing in these verses:

**2. THERE ARE VIRTUES DISPLAYED IN SPIRITUAL PROGRESS (2 Peter 1:5-7).**

When we pay the price to grow in our faith, to make spiritual progress, the end product is that we will display the qualities of Jesus's life. Spiritual progress, is not measured by how many times you read through the Bible this year, or how much money you give, or how many Sundays you go to church. All of those things are important. But you can do all of those things and still not display the virtues of spiritual progress. You can be religious and still be mean as a snake. You can be religious and still have a heart filled with lust. You can be religious and still be proud. But when our aim is to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, we will begin to take on the qualities displayed in the life of Jesus that are only possible by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in us.

**ILLUSTRATION** – When the Super Hero Legos are assembled properly, this is what they will look like. And the proper way to assemble them is described in the instruction booklet. Well our instruction book as we assemble the Christ-life is the Word of God. And the individual pieces are not intended to exist alone. I guess you could take one little piece and just play with that, but that's not the point. All these pieces go together to build something. In this section you see that we are to add to our faith, etc. So there are things that are to "go with" each other. ("This goes with this.") And the finished product will be the life of Jesus Christ. The individual pieces are to be *added* to other pieces to make something really fun.

Now Peter makes a chain of eight virtues, one attached to the other. Write these eight virtues as I talk about them.

**2 Peter 1:5 - For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;**

**"faith..."** – This is confidence in God. And it's the foundation for everything else in the Christian life. We cannot save ourselves and we cannot sanctify ourselves. So we have to continually trust in God for the grace to become all that He has created us to become.

**QUOTE:** The late Adrian Rogers once said: "Grace says "I love you," reaching down. Faith says, "I believe you," reaching up."

**"add to your faith goodness..."** - Goodness is moral excellence and virtue. It is a quality attributed to Christ and God in v.3. So when we pay the price to develop goodness in our lives we are striving to become more like Him. And the only reason that we can become "good" is because God has given us a new life that includes "goodness."

**"and to goodness, knowledge..."** – What he is talking about here is the practical knowledge of the will of God and the ways of God. And the only way you can do this is by spending time with God in His Word and in prayer. Again, there's a price to be paid. You have to make the choice to get up a little earlier, rearrange your schedule a little bit, in order to make time for this.

**2 Peter 1:6 - and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;**

**“and to knowledge, self-control...”** – This is the ability to master and keep in check your desires and your actions. Notice that this is not something that occurs naturally. God’s grace, however, gives us the ability to say no to sin and self, but we are the ones who have to put in the effort.

**“and to self-control, perseverance...”** – This is the ability to stand up under pressure ... to endure when circumstances are difficult. Now it’s important for me to interject here that progress in these areas in our lives comes through adversity. We cannot “add” these qualities to our lives without being put into situations where we have to use them.

**“and to perseverance, godliness...”** – This word means devotion to the person of God. In the original language the word literally means “to worship well.” When we talk about a person being “godly” we mean that they have a deep devotion to God. But again, there’s a price to be paid.

### **1 Timothy 4:7b - Train yourself to be godly.**

The word “train” means to discipline. It’s the word from which we get our word “gymnasium.” So there is spiritual exercise involved in godliness. You don’t *try* to be godly. You *train* to be godly.

**ILLUSTRATION** – I was running yesterday with some friends who want to run the Cowtown Marathon at the end of February. They know you don’t just get up one day and say, “I think I’ll go out and try to run a marathon.” No, you train to run a marathon.

Training involves a daily regimen of doing the same things over and over until it becomes instinctive for you. You may hear an inspiring sermon on devotion to God and think “Okay, I’m going to *try* to be closer to God.” No, you *train* to be closer to God.

**QUOTE:** Donald Whitney in his book *Spiritual Disciplines and the Christian Life* writes this: “The gold of godliness isn’t found on the surface of Christianity. It has to be dug from the depths with the tools of the disciplines. But for those who persevere, the treasures are more than worth the troubles.”

### **2 Peter 1:7 - and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.**

**“and to godliness, brotherly kindness...”** – This describes the love of a family, the love that should typify the fellowship of believers. As we grow in Christ we begin to have a deep affection for believers, the church, the Body of Christ. But our love is not just to be toward the church or people like us. We are to love all people, and that requires a different kind of love.

**“and to brotherly kindness, love...”** - If “brotherly kindness” describes the affection we have for people like us, then “love” describes the commitment we have to love all people, even those who are not like us. It’s not just affection; it is self-sacrificing love for the good of another.

So the first link in the chain is faith and the last one is love.

So in spiritual progress there is a price to be paid. And that are virtues to be displayed. But also...

### **3. THERE ARE BENEFITS TO BE GAINED IN SPIRITUAL PROGRESS (2 Peter 1:8).**

**2 Peter 1:8 - 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.**

**1 Timothy 4:8 - For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.**

**2 Peter 1:8a – “For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure...”**

Do you see the progress there? That’s the goal ... to possess these qualities in increasing measure ... that’s the goal of a lifetime and in ever season of our life.

And here’s the benefit:

**2 Peter 1:8b - They will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

“Ineffective” means to be idle or useless. When we are growing in these qualities, we’ll not be sitting on the bench, but rather we’ll be out on the court. “Unproductive” means literally, "no fruit." Is there the fruit of Christlikeness showing up on your life?

Is that what your life looks like? Ineffective and unproductive ... idle and unfruitful?

### **CONCLUSION**

Now look over those eight virtues that are listed here and in your sermon notes. As you think about where you are now, and where you know you need to be, you may say, “I’m doing well in this area ... making progress. But over here ... well, that’s a different story.” Circle two or three of the virtues that you need to possess in increasing measure. Then let’s pray and ask God to do that work in our lives.

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