

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION? (Part-four of a four-part study)

This study would not be complete without a brief consideration of the apostle Peter's perspective, provided for us in 2 Peter 1:1-11. It is the most comprehensive of all, in that he presents a panoramic big picture of the Christian life; portraying it as a process of growth with very positive results. In vv1-4, he makes his fellow believers aware of all the spiritual resources available to us; with which we must become engaged. So, in order to motivate us in that direction, he begins v5 with the expression "applying all diligence." The word "diligence" speaks of a determined effort on the part of the Christian and is coupled with a participle which means "to bring alongside of." In other words, Peter is calling for an active cooperation on the part of the Christian, in conjunction with what God has provided and is seeking to accomplish in our lives. It is reminiscent of what Paul calls for in Philippians 2:12-13. Since God is at work in us, we must be at work with Him.

The end result is four-fold. **First**, this cooperative effort will bring about a spiritual development in the believer's inner character and outward behavior. The lifestyle pictured in vv5-7 is clearly progressive in nature. Even after this sequence of growth is completed, it isn't over, as the apostle emphasizes in 2 Peter 1:8 –

“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.”

Once the Christian virtues of vv5-7 are cultivated, they must keep INCREASING! The implication? There is always room for further growth in every Christian's life; generating the **second** positive result of rendering us useful and fruitful to God in accomplishing His purposes in our world. The **third** beneficial outcome serves as a preventative and is outlined in vv9-10. Continued spiritual growth and development will keep us from stumbling. Peter is not indicating the potential for a loss of salvation here. The word "stumble" refers to the "experience of a reversal." He is warning against a possible backsliding, which can create the loss of one's assurance of salvation, as well as any further usefulness in serving Christ. In other words, there is no room for complacency in the Christian life! If you stop moving forward and begin standing still, it won't be long before you start sliding backward. **Fourth**, the benefit revealed in v11 involves the promise of receiving an eternal reward for our efforts in cooperating with God's grace at work in us; similar to the encouragement given by John in 1 John 3:2-3 –

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”