

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Our Practice of Righteousness 2 Peter 1:5-11

Our topic will be our practice of righteousness from 2 Peter 1:5-11, so if you will turn there I will read it and you can follow along in your Bible.

"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 shortsighted, 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; (11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

This passage deals with sanctification. As you go through life, you will encounter many daily instances of the opportunity to apply sanctification to your life and act according to God's will, and hopefully you will want to do this. Some occasions are more memorable than others. I had a memorable occasion this April. I was at a coach-pitch game. My kids play baseball in the spring, and in the springtime, it's sort of a recreational league. It's not really serious or competitive but they get out there and join with other kids their age. In the past we have joined with other people from the church, maybe your kids have been with our kids' team, it's been fun; but this past spring we needed to have a certain time so we signed up and didn't really know anybody else on the team ahead of time. So, we kind of got whatever we got.

Well, the coach that we got was very enthusiastic but didn't know a lot about baseball, and that was okay because this is sort of recreational. She would do some interesting things, like when we were going to have a practice, which I could get to. After the batter hit the ball, if there was nobody on base, she might have the person throw to third base just because the third baseman hadn't gotten the ball for a while. That was fine, we were enjoying the time.

The first game I went to was in the beginning of April. I had been warned by my wife that while coach-pitch meant that the coach pitched to the kids, she was recruiting the parents to pitch. Okay, so I was there, I got my chair out, sat myself on the side lines, and was grabbing something to drink when the game was about to start and she called me over and said, "Could you pitch" and I said, "Sure, I'll be happy to pitch." Little did she know that I have twelve years of experience of pitching at Valley Bible softball, so I was well equipped for the task.

So, I get up there and these seven or eight year old kids are ready to hit my pitches, so I lob them in there and the first batter didn't do too well, so she said to me, "Move up some" so I moved up a little bit. She's very enthusiastic and she cheered me on, "Come on, dad, you can do it," and so I got a little closer and kept pitching, the next one not doing too well and then she tells me, "lob the ball more."

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Well if you are familiar with April in the Antelope Valley it's a little windy and I'm a little concerned about lobbing the ball a little higher. Not only does the wind take it, of course, but the higher you lob it, the harder it is to hit, but ok I will try lobbing it a little higher and so the next batter is not doing too well either.

I'm not too worried because Shelby and Brady are coming up in the line up pretty soon and maybe we will get a hit here, and so I'm trying to lob it a little higher and she says, "Come on, dad, lob it a little higher" and so I lob it a little higher, kind of concerned about the wind and finally (were at the fourth or fifth batter by this time), she calls me over and as I'm coming over to the side lines, I pass a older gentlemen, maybe mid 50's or so, decidedly un-athletic and a little on the heavy side, and I'm starting to wonder, "I think I'm being replaced" but I wasn't sure yet until she says to me, "That's okay, dad, next time you will get a chance to warm up and you'll do a lot better."

There are parents on the sidelines just having a great time laughing at this incident, falling off their chairs, my wife and friends are among them. I am a little disappointed in myself. I kind of walk off the field thinking maybe I can join another team. Now I trust I didn't hold that against her. I wasn't angry or too upset about this, but there are always opportunities that we have when things don't go exactly as we expect, or we think they are going as we expected them to go and somebody else doesn't. There are opportunities for us to apply righteousness and that's more important than how we look or how we are being treated. Hopefully we will be pleasing the Lord and growing in our faith rather than just being concerned about ourselves, which moves us to the Scripture.

The first section, verses 5-7, deals with these character qualities, and the first thing it says about these character qualities is essentially sanctification requires effort.

"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."

This is the very reason this is being addressed. What is the purpose of sanctification? The reason why we are to apply all diligence in faith, moral excellence, knowledge, the verses just before this clue us in and I will read the passage in chapter 1 verse 3 and 4 that move us into what is being referenced here. **"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (4) For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."**

So, the purpose of sanctification is so we may become partakers of the divine nature. The purpose of sanctification is truly to be come like Christ, to become partakers in the divine nature, to become more godly. In other words, the purpose of sanctification isn't just to have a better life, it isn't just to get better at doing certain things and to improve ourselves, it is to become like Jesus Christ, to become a partaker in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world. As we do this, God's at work and we are at work.

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It says, "**For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**" So He has granted something to us. As we are pursuing sanctification, His grace enables us to seek it out. He has given us the power and the ability to seek this, and this pursuit requires maximum effort. Some versions say, "eager" or "effort," mine says "applying all diligence." We are to be diligent, putting maximum effort into the task of godliness. Without the effort on our part, the grace that God has given us to become godly will be thwarted.

Perhaps you remember **Philippians 2:12-13**? "**So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (13) for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**" There is a synergy involved between the Lord's work and our response to His work and sanctification, as opposed to salvation, which is His work.

The salvation Philippians 2 is speaking of is the whole salvation process on earth of us becoming sanctified or more godly. God's power grants us all things to live a godly life. We have the ability to live a godly life. We have God's spirit within us. We have God's Word. We have fellow believers encouraging us. We have the strength and grace and power to do this. However, God's grace also grants us the power to choose a godly life. We can potentially choose to not follow this, so this is why diligence is necessary. This is why we are encouraged to supply these character qualities. God's grace grants us the power to choose and hopefully we will choose well.

Now, as we look at the character qualities in verses 5-7, there's a progression in these characteristics. This isn't just a list, it's a list that is in order. Let me try to show you this. The first characteristic is faith, the last one is love; begins with faith and ends with love, and this is how we truly mature in our faith is to end in love. To be the kind of loving person that God intends us to be starts with faith. If we do not have true saving faith, we will not have the ability to love as God would have us to. And it has things in between faith and love and there's a progression; starts with faith, it ends with love.

Our faith brings goodness, "**in your faith supply moral excellence.**" When we have faith, when we embrace Jesus as our Savior, when we want to believe in Him, that belief in Him moves us to want to avoid evil and act right, do good. It's a natural response to faith to want goodness. When we want goodness (there's a difference between wanting to act good and actually acting good, because we don't know how to do that very well), when we want to know how to do good, that's where knowledge comes in, "**and in your moral excellence, knowledge.**" So, we want to follow God's will, but now we need to learn what God's will is and to fill our minds with the knowledge of God so that we can do that with knowledge, with truth rather than just what seems best to us. So goodness seeks out knowledge.

The application of knowledge is self-control, "**and in your knowledge, self-control.** As we desire to do good and to know more about how to do this we will see that we must control ourselves, we must not just let ourselves go astray and act however we choose to. We must rein in our fleshly desires and be self-controlled. We must apply the knowledge to control ourselves. That's the fruit of the spirit, right? Some of these are fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control (to be able to by God's spirit control ourselves).

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The fruit of self-control is perseverance, "**and in your self-control, perseverance.**" If we are acting and choosing to control ourselves and we continue that momentum of self-control, we will endure, we will persevere, we will not shrink away, and we will endure to the end. In order to be persevering we must exhibit self-control. The fruit of self-control is perseverance and through perseverance we become godly. As we continue to pursue God, we will end up becoming godly, "**and in your perseverance, godliness.**"

Now personal godliness isn't the end yet. If we are becoming more holy there is another thing that is happening, and that other thing that is happening is not just godliness for ourselves but for others also. We cannot do God's will just by ceasing to sin. We must do God's will also by serving others and that's where this brotherly kindness comes in. Godly people feel fondly towards believers. Brotherly kindness, this is the Greek word PHILADELPHIA meaning "brotherly love, having a fond love for your fellow believers in Christ." If we are godly, that godliness will work itself out in brotherly kindness. This is how no one can pretend that they are just seeking godliness without being actually personally connected and involved with their fellow believers in Christ and looking to encourage and love them from the heart. This fondness of being kind towards brothers and sisters in Christ is indeed love. This produces true love, agape love, love that comes from a commitment. We will be able to live out this kind of commitment if it has been preceded by faith, goodness, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness. All of these things move us toward being able to love well. But it starts with faith.

Whenever you find difficulty in life a challenge in doing God's will, you can go back to the fundamentals of faith and look at what is it that I'm not trusting about God and what He says, and am I looking to trust myself in my ways. It's like baseball when you first get out there and you are learning to throw. Even the major league pitchers, when they are struggling, work on their mechanics, on how to throw, and they avoid arm trouble, or they are able to pitch better. It's very much like coming back to the fundamentals. Faith is the root. It's the bottom most important thing of knowing that we must trust God.

This progression is cyclical. This is not working on faith and then moving on to goodness and then we get that moving on. It's cyclical. We are working on all these things from beginning to end. We are moving back to faith and through knowledge and self-control and onto loving our fellow believers from the heart. This is something we are working on all at the same time, continually, cyclical. Sanctification requires effort, diligence to pursue this. Apart from that, it's not going to happen.

The next thing that sanctification results in is effectiveness. "**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.**" We will become effective because those who are maturing are fruitful. If these qualities are yours, if you are able to look at these characteristic and say yes, I see myself exhibiting self-control, persevering, you may not be 100 percent but that does exist in your life, that's good, but there is something else here. Those who are maturing possess these things, these sanctifications, and progress in their sanctifications. If these qualities are yours and are increasing they render you neither useless nor unfruitful. They must be growing in your life and hopefully you can look at your life and see some progress in these character qualities moving towards godliness and love. You're becoming more loving as a Christian today then you were in the past.

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Those who are maturing possess sanctification and are progressing. Hopefully you are maturing; if you are you will be neither rendered ineffective or unfruitful.

The myopic, **"For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins."** We may lack sanctification and basically become spiritually near sighted, myopic, even to blindness. I can relate to this because I am, without corrective lenses, exceedingly myopic. In fact, I have yet to meet a person who has an ability to be corrected in their vision, in other words, is not actually blind who has a prescription that is worse than mine. I remember going in to an eye glass store and the person says, "Oh my, I don't think we can do this," and then they go and consult with the technician and he gets excited and says, "I think we can." So, without my glasses or contact lenses I am exceedingly near sighted. So much so that at night I put my glasses on the dresser in an exact place so that when I get up in the morning I can reach for them so that I can see.

Occasionally I make a mistake and I reach for them and they are not there. Fortunately I'm married and I can say, "Kelly, do you know where my glasses are?" But before I was married I'd reach over and if they were not there I was in trouble. I can't see, and not only can I not see, I can't say, "Oh I know where they are because I would have remembered to put them right where I can find them." I become very forgetful and I'm in big trouble and I'm searching around trying to find them and it's a bit of concern if no one is around to help me. Hopefully you are around to help those who are spiritually blind or short sighted, near sighted, myopic, to not be so forgetful but to be able to find their way, and their way is to have these qualities within them which starts from faith. So, if we are looking to help people, we start with faith, to really be able to trust in the Lord Jesus that He has indeed provided purification from our former sins and we have accepted that, and having accepted that we respond with thankfulness that that brings to our lives.

It's possible for believers to have forgotten their purification from their sins of the past, just forgotten that and to be blind and myopic. Hopefully we are willing to help people in this and not just let them grope around. Those who are not maturing will lose the sanctification they once possessed. If you are not growing in your faith you just don't stagnate, it will inevitably be either up or down, you will begin to lose the ability to be god like. If you are lacking these qualities you will be blind and shortsighted and forget the purification of your former sins.

Another example again from my life, in junior high, high school and college I played a musical instrument. I played the trumpet. I was in seventh grade and my dad said I had to take band. I wanted to take P.E. but he insisted that I take band instead of P.E., so I was very disappointed. I had to choose a musical instrument. So, I choose the trumpet. I was very naïve. Do you know why I choose the trumpet? It has three valves. I thought three valves. I can do that. It didn't have all these keys. Well, big mistake. Not only is it not that easy, but here is the big problem. The big problem is after you stop playing the trumpet, you know what happens? You can't play it anymore. It is dependent upon the muscles around your lips know at an embouchure to be able to play. Now, if I would have been smarter, I would have chosen another instrument that didn't depend on certain muscles that I never use apart from playing that instrument. So, if you are thinking about playing an instrument, the trumpet's great except you can't really sit around the campfire and sing along with the trumpet. And if you do not continue to play it, you cannot play it. If I were to pick up a trumpet now, my range is about a quarter of what it used to be as far as low and particularly high notes. As

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far as duration, well I used to be able to play an entire football game. I can play about five minutes and I cannot play and get any sound out of the thing anymore. If I do not continue in it I loose the ability to play it.

If you do not continue pursuing maturity in the Christian life you will lose the ability to act in the Christian way you are presently able to act in. You must move forward in maturing your Christian life or you will lose the sanctification you even posses now. As we move forward we are looking, progressing forward in our faith, looking to Jesus. And if you are not moving forward looking to Jesus you will loose what you have.

Our final section is verses 10 and 11. Sanctification rewards in eternity. Sanctification results in effectiveness (verses 8 and 9), and sanctification rewards in eternity (verses 10 and 11).

"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; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

There is a future for us in sanctification. Verse 10 gives an idea of being certain about who is calling and choosing you. Spiritual growth, as we are maturing, brings about a present assurance, **"for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble."** So, it's very possible to be certain that we are indeed called, chosen. If you are a Christian, election is sure. We can know that we have been chosen and called by God, if we are diligently applying. So, the question really isn't whether this is true or not. God knows those who are His and He knows who are Christians, and to those who He has elected to Himself, salvation is sure.

But here is what's in doubt. What is in question is how sure we are. There is no doubt about what reality is, but whether we are sure of this ourselves, that is in question. So, we must be diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing. Those who are not maturing will lose the assurance of the salvation they once possessed. They once had an assurance, but if you are not maturing you will lose that assurance. We may not have an ability to be sure of our salvation if we are not growing. What is the reason you can be assured of your salvation? Someone will say to you, "If you are to die today are you sure you would go to heaven?" The primary reason you can be sure of your salvation is that Jesus promised that those who believe have eternal life (John 6:47), so we can know, based on His promise, that if we believe we have eternal life. That is the basis for our assurance.

But there is a secondary basis, and that is how do we know we believe and are not just fooling ourselves, kidding ourselves? So, how we can know if we believe we have eternal life? How do we know we truly believe? Well, we know we truly believe by looking at our life and saying, "Yes, I'm being diligent to make certain of His calling and choosing." In other words, I can look and see that I am pursuing these characteristics. I care about them and I am looking to apply all diligence in bringing faith and upon faith, goodness and upon goodness, self-control and perseverance and all these things.

Those who are maturing protect themselves from stumbling. If we are maturing, if we are seeking God, we will be protected from falling away. We are not just protected from falling away by saying, "I'm not going to fall away, I'm not going to fall away, I'm not going to fall away, I'm not going to fall away."

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We are protected from stumbling by being focused on the Lord and what the Lord's will is in our life and by following that and maturing. As we mature we have this momentum going and we are adding to our faith, self-control, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. And we can have confidence. It is indeed something that we can have confidence in. If we can look at our lives and see these character qualities increasing, we can know that we are not just kidding ourselves, that we are just not saying something that has no bearing on reality.

When we have faith and we have genuine faith, that genuine faith will result in a desire for goodness and a desire to know how to be good, how and to know good and to be self-controlled. It will result in these things. Yes, you will not be perfect in this, but you will be able to see some activity, some progress. And the more diligent you are in this, the more certain you can be sure that you are not fooling yourself and these aren't just words, these are indeed truth. Spiritual growth brings about present assurance and hopefully each of us can be assured that we are not kidding ourselves. We really truly believe, and if we believe we can know we are called by God and chosen by Him.

The last verse, spiritual growth brings eternal acceptance. **"For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."** As we pursue sanctification and have that effort result in effectiveness and being fruitful, not unfruitful, we will have an eternity that God welcomes us to. We will have an entrance into the eternal kingdom and we will enjoy a fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual growth brings an eternal acceptance into His kingdom. Our future is entranced into the eternal realm. This eternal realm is everlasting. It does not pass away.

In our past, in our nations past, there have been times where people have persevered and endured and have been very successful. I think of wars where people who have persevered have been welcomed home at times, not all wars, but some wars. My father was a pilot in World War II and when he came home his brother, my uncle Henry, his older brother, was working at a bank. In fact, that's how my family got through the Depression, because my uncle had a job at a bank. Well, Uncle Henry had my dad come and meet the president of the bank. The president of the bank welcomed my dad back from war and said, "So, what's your future? Would you like to continue to fly?" and my dad said, "No, I'm going to go to college and study."

Later he looked back at that meeting with the bank president and he remembered a picture behind the bank president picturing the bank president and President Roosevelt and Eddie Rickenbacker. And he put two and two together, that the bank president knew Eddie Rickenbacker. Eddie Rickenbacker was the number one flying pilot in WWI for the United States and he became the head of Eastern Airlines. This person had a connection to the head of Eastern Airlines and could have gotten my dad at least a position to get a job as a pilot. But he didn't realize that at the time and he went to college. But looking back at it he had an opportunity. He had an opportunity because he was being welcomed back. How much more will we be welcomed into the eternal kingdom after pursuing, diligently, the will of God here on earth.

I don't know what you think of when you are looking for the eternal reward but our eternal reward is more abundant. It is eternal, it is not just temporal, and it is not just small. It is abundant.

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Our future is in enjoying an abundant reward. This abundant reward that will be supplied to us, what is this? Well, I don't think it's just a bunch of stuff because if we really desire to follow the Lord, you know what happens to our interest in a bunch of stuff? It starts to wane, the stuff, the things of this present life, becomes a little less important to us. What becomes more and more important to us are the very things we have talked about this morning. These characteristics, these character qualities. And if you are seeking to know God and to applying these things in your life then what better reward, abundant reward, is the holiness that we will achieve when we are entering into the eternal dwelling.

Or put it this way, an earthly life of practicing righteousness will reap an eternal life of perpetual righteousness. It will never end. We will no longer be battling with the sin that we currently struggle with. We will no longer have our flesh moving us to want to rebel and to live for ourselves and please ourselves. Then we will be freed from the shackles of this present life and the sin that surrounds us. And we will be able to enjoy righteousness as God intended. Hopefully this excites you and you can look forward to this place prepared for us, a place of righteousness, and be longing for that. If you are that will help you pursue God in righteousness today.

Let's bow in a word of prayer together. Lord Jesus, we do thank you for giving us the ability to want to know you this morning, for giving us a desire to be here this morning. To come and to worship together and listen to Your Word together. We pray that this has been meaningful to our hearts to want to become more like You, to become more Christ like. And as we seek that we pray that the ability You have given us to make these good choices will be put into practice with all diligence, a maximum effort so that we will never stumble. We can be certain that we are indeed one of your children. And in that we can look forward to the day that we will be able to enjoy perpetual righteousness, being completely freed from the sin that so easily entangles us. We ask that in Jesus name, Amen.