



Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ



Sermon Outlines On The Eight Graces Of A Christ-Like Character

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These outlines were developed in the course of my ministry as a preacher of the gospel. Feel free to use them as they are, or adapt them to suit your own personal style. To God be the glory!

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Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Developing A Christ- Like Character

INTRODUCTION

1. The second epistle of Peter is certainly a poignant letter...
 - a. Written with an awareness that his death was imminent - **2 Pe 1:14**
 - b. Warning that false teachers would seek to lead them astray - **2 Pe 2:1-2**
 - c. With a hope that they would be mindful of the commandments given to them by the apostles of Jesus Christ - **2 Pe 3:1-2**

2. The final command this aged apostle leaves his readers is a charge to "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" - cf. **2 Pe 3:18**
 - a. What does it mean to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ?
 - b. How can we be sure that we are growing in this "knowledge"?

3. With this lesson, we begin a series entitled "**Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ**"...
 - a. To define what Peter had in mind when he gave us his final charge
 - b. To encourage growth and development in this "knowledge" of Jesus

[We are not left to wonder what Peter had in mind, for in **2 Pe 1:5-8** we learn...]

I. WHAT IT MEANS TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

A. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EIGHT GRACES...

1. These "graces" are listed in **2 Pe 1:5-7**
2. Briefly defined...
 - a. **Faith** is "conviction, strong assurance"
 - b. **Virtue** is "moral excellence, goodness"
 - c. **Knowledge** is "correct insight"
 - d. **Self-control** is "self-discipline"
 - e. **Perseverance** is "bearing up under trials"
 - f. **Godliness** is "godly character out of devotion to God"
 - g. **Brotherly kindness** is "love toward brethren"
 - h. **Love** is "active goodwill toward others"
3. Now note carefully **2 Pe 1:8**
 - a. We must "abound" in these eight graces
 - b. Only then can it be said that we are "growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ"
4. It is more than simply increasing our "intellectual" knowledge of Jesus!
 - a. Such knowledge has a place, but it is just one of the graces necessary
 - b. Peter is talking about growing in a fuller and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ!
 - 1) Which comes by developing the "Christ-like" attributes listed in this passage
 - 2) The more we grow in these "graces", the more we really "know" Jesus (for He is the perfect personification of these "graces")

5. That it involves more than intellectual knowledge is also evident from the Greek word used or knowledge in **2 Pe 1:2-3,8**
 - a. The word is **epignosis** {ep-ig'-no-sis}, meaning "to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, know well" (Thayer)
 - b. Such knowledge comes only as we demonstrate these "Christ-like graces" in our lives

B. IN CONJUNCTION WITH EACH OTHER...

1. Notice the word **"add"** (or "supply") in **2 Pe 1:5**
 - a. Before each grace mentioned, the word is implied
 - b. The word in Greek is **epichoregeo** {ep-ee-khor-ayg-eh'-o}
 - 1) "Originally, to found and support a chorus, to lead a choir, to keep in tune"
 - 2) "Then, to supply or provide"
 - c. This word suggests the idea of "each grace working in harmony with the others to produce an overall effect"
2. Notice also the preposition **"to"** (or "in") in **2 Pe 1:5-7**
 - a. This implies "each grace is to temper and make perfect the grace that goes before it"
 - b. To illustrate this point:
 - 1) **"to knowledge (add) self-control"** - the grace of self-control enables one to apply properly the knowledge one has
 - 2) **"to self-control (add) perseverance"** - self-control in turn needs the quality of perseverance to be consistent day after day
3. Therefore each grace is necessary!
 - a. They must all be developed in conjunction with each other
 - b. We cannot be selective and just pick the ones we like and leave others behind

C. WITH ALL DILIGENCE...

1. Notice the repeated use of the word "diligence" - **2 Pe 1:5,10**
2. It means "earnestness, zeal, sometimes with haste"
3. To grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ requires much effort
4. We do not "accidentally" or "naturally" develop these graces!
5. If we are not careful, we may be like the teacher in the following illustration:
In his book Folk Psalms of Faith, Ray Stedman tells a story of a woman who had been a school teacher for 25 years. When she heard about a job that would mean a promotion, she applied for the position. However, someone who had been teaching for only one year was hired instead. She went to the principal and asked why. The principal responded, "I'm sorry, but you haven't had 25 years of experience as you claim; you've had only one year's experience 25 times." During that whole time the teacher had not improved.
6. We may have been Christians for a number of years; but unless...
 - a. We "add" to our faith these Christ-like qualities with all "diligence"
 - b. We are simply repeating the first year over and over again!

[Is the effort worth it? In the context of this passage (**2 Pe 1:2-11**) Peter provides five reasons why we should "give all diligence" to grow in this knowledge of Jesus Christ...]

II. REASONS TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

A. GRACE AND PEACE ARE MULTIPLIED...

1. Grace and peace are common forms of greeting in the New Testament
 - a. **Grace** - a greeting which requests God's unmerited favor upon the person addressed
 - b. **Peace** - a greeting requesting the natural result of God's favor
 2. Note that these two blessings are "multiplied" in the knowledge of Jesus Christ - **2 Pe 1:2**
 - a. All men experience God's favor and its result to some degree - cf. **Mt 5:45**
 - b. But only in Christ can one enjoy the "fulness" of God's favor and peace - **Ep 1:3; Ph 4:6-7**
- **If you desire God's grace and peace to be "multiplied" in your life, it is through the knowledge (epignosis) of Jesus Christ; i.e., as you become more like Him!**

B. ALL THINGS PERTAINING TO LIFE AND GODLINESS PROVIDED...

1. We note that God provides all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge (epignosis) of Him who called us to glory and virtue - **2 Pe 1:3**
 - a. **Life** in this context refers to our spiritual life and well-being
 - b. **Godliness** refers to the pious conduct which comes out of devotion to God
 2. Only as we grow in this knowledge do we enjoy the true, full life available by God's divine power!
 - a. Which includes "exceedingly great and precious promises" - **2 Pe 1:4a**
 - b. Which enables us to be "partakers of the divine nature" - **2 Pe 1:4b**
 - c. Which can free us from the "corruption that is in the world through lust" - **2 Pe 1:4c**
- **If we desire to have all that God offers related to life and godliness, it comes as we develop the Christ-like character!**

C. SPIRITUAL "MYOPIA" AND "AMNESIA" AVOIDED...

1. Our religion is **shortsighted** if we are not growing in the knowledge of Jesus! - **2 Pe 1:9a**
 - a. For what is the ultimate objective of being a Christian?
 - b. Is it not to become like Christ? - cf. also **Ro 8:29; Co 3:9-11**
 - c. As we have seen, this is what it really means to grow in the knowledge of Christ
 2. Failure to so grow indicates we have **forgotten** why we were redeemed by the blood of Christ in the first place! - **2 Pe 1:9b**
 - a. To have our sins forgiven, yes...
 - b. But also to become what He wants us to be - like His Son!
- **Unless we want to be guilty of forgetfulness and shortsightedness, we need to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ!**

D. WE WILL NEVER STUMBLE...

1. Peter says "if you do these things you will never stumble" - **2 Pe 1:10**
 - a. If you are diligent to make your calling and election sure
 - b. If you add to your faith virtue, etc.
 - c. If you abound in these eight graces
2. This does not mean we will never sin - cf. **1 Jn 1:8,10**
 - a. The word "stumble" in Greek means "to fall into misery, become wretched; cf. the loss of salvation" (Thayer)
 - b. We will never stumble so as to fall short of our ultimate salvation!

-- **But this assurance is true only if we are "giving all diligence" to grow in the knowledge of Christ and thereby "making our calling and election sure"**

E. AN ABUNDANT ENTRANCE INTO THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM...

1. This "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" - **2 Pe 1:11**
 - a. Is the "heavenly kingdom" referred to by Paul in **2 Ti 4:18**
 - b. In other words, the ultimate destiny of the redeemed!
2. What is meant by the idea of an "abundant entrance"?
 - a. "You may be able to enter, not as having escaped from a shipwreck, or from fire, but as it were in triumph." (Bengel)
 - b. By possessing the eight graces, we will be able to live victoriously in this life and to joyously anticipate what lies ahead - cf. **2 Ti 4:6-8**

CONCLUSION

1. Are these not sufficient reasons to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ?
2. For through such knowledge...
 - a. Grace and peace are multiplied
 - b. All things pertaining to life and godliness are provided
 - c. Spiritual myopia and amnesia are avoided
 - d. We will never stumble
 - e. An abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom will be ours!
3. Because such knowledge requires...
 - a. The development of eight graces
 - b. In conjunction with each other
 - b. With all diligence

...I trust you will agree that a careful study of these eight "graces" which lead to **"Developing A Christ-Like Character"** is worth the effort!

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Building On Faith

INTRODUCTION

1. In the introductory lesson, we noted that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ...
 - a. Involves the development of eight Christ-like graces
 - b. Developed in conjunction with each other
 - c. Requiring all diligence
 - **Thereby creating an octave of spiritual harmony best exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ**

2. We observed five reasons why we ought to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ...
 - a. Grace and peace are multiplied
 - b. All things pertaining to spiritual life and godliness are provided
 - c. Spiritual myopia and amnesia are avoided
 - d. We will never stumble
 - e. An abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord
 - **Certainly sufficient reasons to spur development of a Christ-like character in ourselves!**

3. In this study, we shall take a closer look at the first of these eight graces: **faith**...
 - a. The foundation of our spiritual development
 - b. Upon which all other graces are to be "added"

[Developing a Christ-like character is therefore built upon faith. But one might ask: "**What is faith?**"...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF FAITH

A. THE GREEK WORD IS PISTIS...

1. The definition given by Greek scholars:
 - a. "a firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing" (Vine)
 - b. "conviction of the truth of anything, belief" (Thayer)
2. Used primarily in two ways in the NT:
 - a. **Subjectively (the faith we have)**
 - 1) Such as our faith in God
 - a) "the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ" (Thayer)
 - b) Used this way in **He 11:6**
 - 2) Such as our faith in Christ
 - a) "the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God" (Thayer)
 - b) Used this way in **Ga 2:16**

- b. **Objectively (the object of our faith)**
 - 1) "the substance of Christian faith or what is believed by Christians" (Thayer)
 - 2) Used this way in **Ju 3**
- **We are focusing on subjective faith (the faith we have) in this study**

B. AS DESCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS...

- 1. Faith is "the substance of things hoped for" - **He 11:1a**
 - a. The NASB reads "the assurance of things hoped for"
 - b. The NIV reads "being sure of what we hope for"
 - c. Faith is being confident that God will give us what is promised, and for which we hope - cf. Abraham's faith, **He 11:8**
 - 2. Faith is "the evidence of things not seen" - **He 11:1b**
 - a. The NASB reads "the conviction of things not seen"
 - b. The NIV reads "certain of what we do not see"
 - c. Faith is having trust or confidence in things unseen by the human eye - again cf. Abraham's faith - **He 11:9-10**
- **Faith is therefore that confidence or trust in God and Christ, regarding things promised or things not seen**

C. FAITH IS NOT CREDULITY...

- 1. Credulity in the sense of "blind faith", trusting for no good reason
- 2. Many have this misconception of faith
 - a. That faith is believing in something without evidence
 - b. As one person said, "You just have to have faith", rather than provide reasons for such faith
- 3. Yet we shall see later that faith...
 - a. ...while trusting in things not seen, with a conviction regarding things hoped for
 - b. ...is a trust and confidence based upon strong evidence!

[With this understanding of faith, one might also ask: "**Is faith really that important?**" Yes! Consider how faith is demanded of us...]

II. THE DEMAND OF FAITH

A. IT IS THE FOUNDATION FOR A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD...

- 1. Without faith, it is impossible to please God
 - a. We must believe that He is - **He 11:6**
 - b. God has no pleasure in those lacking in faith - **He 10:35-39**
 - 2. Faith is the underlying element in our salvation and service to God
 - a. The key that unlocks the way to salvation - **Jn 1:12**
 - b. The motivating force behind our life of service - **Ga 2:20**
- **Without faith, we can't even get started in our relationship with God!**

B. IT IS THE CATALYST FOR POWER FROM GOD...

- 1. There is power available to those who believe - **Ep 1:18-20**
- 2. It is power beyond our imagination - **Ep 3:20-21**

- a. Power that enables us to overcome - **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - b. Power that we should be careful about limiting - **2 Ti 3:1-5**
- **Growth requires power from God, and faith is required for such power!**

[Can we appreciate why Peter starts with "faith" in defining it what it means to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ? It is the very foundation upon which to build a close relationship with God and Christ! But here is another question: "**How can we have faith?**"...]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH

A. DEVELOPING OUR FAITH...

1. Remember, faith is not credulity (blind faith with no evidence)
 - a. Instead, faith is based upon the Word of God - **Ro 10:17**
 - b. The Word of God provides evidence to produce faith - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
 - c. Besides the testimony regarding the miracles of Jesus, other evidences include:
 - 1) Fulfilled prophecy concerning nations and the Messiah
 - 2) The scientific foreknowledge of the Bible
 - 3) The high moral standard it contains
 - 4) The continuity of the Bible despite its various sources

-- While we may "walk by faith, and not by sight" (**2 Co 5:7**), it is not truly a "blind faith"
2. Since faith (i.e., trust, confidence) comes through the Word of God...
 - a. We must be diligent in reading the Bible
 - b. Only then will our faith become stronger

-- **Do we appreciate the value of the Word of God in producing the faith that pleases Him?**

B. MAINTAINING OUR FAITH...

1. We must guard against the sin of unbelief - cf. **He 3:12-14**
 - a. Many people lose their faith, especially when young
 - b. Faith is maintained through constant reading or hearing of the Word
2. We can also maintain faith through Paul's threefold directive - **1 Ti 6:9-12**
 - a. **Flee materialism** - undue concern for things of this world undermine our faith
 - b. **Pursue faith** - this we can do by feeding on God's word
 - c. **Fight the good fight of faith** - the best defense is a good offense; be active in propagating the faith - cf. **Ju 3**

-- **The nation of Israel lost its faith in the wilderness, are we in danger of losing our faith during our sojourn?**

[Finally, a thought or two about how faith in God manifests itself today...]

IV. THE DISPLAY OF FAITH

A. THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL...

1. The gospel of Christ requires obedience
 - a. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him - **He 5:9**
 - b. The gospel Paul preached leads to obedience - **Ro 1:5; 16:25-26**

- c. Fearful consequences come to those who do not obey it - **2 Th 1:7-9**
2. How does one obey the gospel? By obeying the commands of the gospel:
 - a. The command to believe in Jesus - **Mk 16:15-16**
 - b. The command to repent of sins - **Ac 2:38; 17:30**
 - c. The command to confess Jesus - **Mt 10:32; Ro 10:9,10**
 - d. The command to be baptized for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
- **Have you displayed faith by "obeying from the heart" the doctrine presented in the gospel of Christ? - cf. Ro 6:17**

B. THROUGH LIVING FOR JESUS...

1. Trusting in His **words**
 - a. Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness - **Mt 6:33**
 - b. Doing what He says - **Lk 6:46**
 - c. Observing all that He commanded - **Mt 28:20**
2. Trusting in His **promises**
 - a. That He is preparing a place for us - **Jn 14:1-2**
 - b. That He will return one day for us - **Jn 14:3**
- **Are you setting an example of one who walks by faith in Jesus, and not just by what they can see with their eyes, or accomplish on their own strength?**

CONCLUSION

1. Faith is a simple concept, but a crucial one...
 - a. It is simply trusting in God and Jesus
 - b. Regarding things not seen yet hoped for
2. Without faith, it is impossible to...
 - a. **Please God**, for we must believe He exists, rewarding those who diligently seek Him
 - b. **Grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ**, for it is the basis upon which growth is built

May we allow the evidences of God's Word to produce a faith that trusts and obeys a wonderful Savior, who in turn provides "exceedingly great and precious promises" as we grow in our knowledge of Him!

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Striving For Excellence

INTRODUCTION

1. Growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ requires developing a Christ-like character...
 - a. Involving eight graces in conjunction with each other - **2 Pe 1:5-8**
 - b. Involving all diligence to abound in these eight graces - **2 Pe 1:5,8**
2. We saw that this "spiritual construction project" begins with **faith**...
 - a. For without faith it is impossible to please God - **He 11:6**
 - b. For faith is the catalyst making it possible to grow - cf. **Mk 9:23b**
3. But developing a Christ-like character does not occur by "faith only"...
 - a. To faith we must add **virtue**
 - b. The word "add" (epichoregeo) indicating that these two must work together

[So upon the foundation of faith, to grow in the knowledge of Jesus requires that we add the quality of **virtue** ...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF VIRTUE

A. RARELY USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. Paul uses it once: "...if there is any virtue" - **Ph 4:8**
2. Peter uses it four times:
 - a. "...proclaim the praises (virtue) of Him" - **1 Pe 2:9**
 - b. "...who called us by glory and virtue" - **2 Pe 1:3**
 - c. Twice in our text - **2 Pe 1:5**
3. It has been variously translated in our text as:
 - a. "goodness" (NIV)
 - b. "moral excellence" (NASB)
4. It has been variously explained as
 - a. "excellence" (Wycliffe)
 - b. "manly excellence" (JFB)
 - c. "courage, fortitude, vigor, energy" (Clarke, Barnes)

B. THE GREEK WORD IS ARETE...

1. A. T. Robertson says that it is an "old word for any preeminence (moral, intellectual, military)
2. The Greeks used the word:
 - a. To describe "any mental excellence or moral quality or physical power" (Robertson)
 - b. To represent a concept of "excellence" in all phases of life, to which they strove to attain (mental, moral, physical)

C. MY UNDERSTANDING OF "VIRTUE"...

1. It has the connotation of excellence, striving for moral perfection
2. The connection of virtue with faith:
 - a. We begin with **faith** (confidence and trust in God and Christ)
 - b. We must add the quality of **virtue** (the desire to excel and be strong in our faith)

[Virtue is the quality of striving for excellence in our faith-based relationship with God and Jesus Christ. That such a quality is necessary to grow in the knowledge of Jesus should be evident...]

II. THE DEMAND OF VIRTUE

A. SPIRITUAL LIFE DEMANDS VIRTUE...

1. Without virtue, faith soon dies
 - a. Faith without works is a dead faith - cf. **Ja 2:26**
 - b. When faith is joined by virtue (a desire for excellence in our service to God)...
 - 1) Our faith will be a dynamic faith
 - 2) For works will certainly follow one who is "striving for excellence"
2. Without virtue, we cannot grow
 - a. Growing in the knowledge of Jesus requires:
 - 1) "giving all diligence" - **2 Pe 1:5,10**
 - 2) That we "abound" in these graces - **2 Pe 1:8**
 - b. When faith is joined by virtue (striving for excellence)...
 - 1) Diligent effort will be made
 - 2) Abounding in these graces will be the goal of our faith

B. DISCIPLESHIP DEMANDS VIRTUE...

1. Christ taught His disciples to strive for excellence - **Mt 5:48**
 - a. He died to make it possible - **He 10:12-14**
 - b. He established offices (functions) in His church to ensure it - **Ep 4:11-13**
2. Paul considered excellence in disciples the objective of his ministry - cf. **Co 1:28-29**
 - a. He therefore encouraged the Corinthians to this end - **2 Co 7:1**
 - b. He told Timothy that this was the design of Scripture - **2 Ti 3:16-17**

[How can we hope to grow as disciples, to truly come to know our Savior and Lord, unless we add to our faith the quality of virtue? Without a strong desire for excellence, especially in our relationship with Christ, our faith will be weak and possibly die altogether! So let's consider...]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIRTUE

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD...

1. The purpose or design of the Word is to make us perfect - **2 Ti 3:16-17**
2. Give ourselves to reading and meditating upon it, and ...
 - a. We shall be like a strong fruitful tree - **Psa 1:1-3**
 - b. We shall grow in wisdom and understanding - **Psa 119:97-99**
3. We are therefore encouraged to meditate upon that which contains virtue (as surely the Word does!) - **Ph 4:8**

B. THE VALUE OF AN APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE...

1. We are also encouraged to emulate Paul - **Ph 4:9**
2. He described and displayed his own striving for excellence - **Ph 3:12-14**
 - a. Never consider yourself as having reached it - **Ph 3:12a**
 - 1) Don't remain satisfied with the spiritual condition you are in
 - 2) Admit that you always have room to grow
 - b. Forget what lies behind - **Ph 3:13a**
 - 1) Don't rest on your "laurels" (past accomplishments)
 - 2) Don't allow past "mistakes" to prevent future progress
 - c. Reach forward to what lies ahead - **Ph 3:13b**
 - 1) Look ahead with optimism
 - 2) Keep your eye on the prize that awaits - cf. **2 Ti 4:8,18**
 - d. Press on - **Ph 3:12b,14**
 - 1) Never give up
 - 2) Be like the runner in an endurance race - cf. **He 12:1-2**

[Develop this "mindset" (cf. **Ph 3:15**), and we will have developed the "arete" (virtue) our faith needs to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Finally, a thought or two about...]

IV. THE DEMONSTRATION OF VIRTUE

A. IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES...

1. Does our daily walk with God suggest we are striving for excellence?
 2. Are we seeking to excel in our relationship with God?
 - a. By reading His Word daily (listening to Him)?
 - b. By praying without ceasing (talking to Him)?
 3. Are we seeking to excel in our service to God?
 - a. Determining and developing our talents?
 - b. Using those abilities in service to God and others?
- **If we have added virtue to our personal walk of faith, our progress will be evident to others - 1 Ti 4:13-16**

B. IN OUR BIBLE STUDIES AND ASSEMBLIES...

1. Does our involvement in the services of the church suggest we are striving for excellence?
 2. Do we utilize opportunities to increase our faith?
 - a. By attending the Bible studies offered by the church?
 - b. By preparing for them, and being an active contributor to the studies?
 3. Do we exercise opportunities to encourage others?
 - a. By attending the assemblies of the church?
 - b. By participating in the services, exhorting others before and after?
- **If we have added virtue to our public walk of faith, we will be an example worthy of others to emulate - Ph 3:17**

CONCLUSION

1. The Christian who adds **virtue** to their **faith** does not remain static...
 - a. He or she will not be content with their current level of faith and service
 - b. Like Paul, they will desire to press on-- **For they are striving for excellence!**

2. When a Christian adds **virtue** to their **faith**...
 - a. They are more likely to add other qualities to their faith
 - b. Such as knowledge, self-control, etc.-- **For they are striving for excellence!**

To grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, then, let us seek to add to our **faith** the quality of **virtue**!

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Increasing In Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

1. We've seen that growing in the knowledge of Jesus is a process...
 - a. That begins with the foundation of **faith** (trust, conviction)
 - b. To which we add the element of **virtue** (striving for excellence)
2. To faith and virtue we are told to add **knowledge** (**2 Pe 1:5**), which makes sense...
 - a. What good is it to have conviction (faith) and the desire to excel (virtue)?
 - b. Unless we know where to focus our faith and channel our virtue?

[Therefore **knowledge** is an essential element in growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. While that may sound redundant, there is a subtle difference in two words translated knowledge in our text. So let's first review...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF KNOWLEDGE

A. THE KNOWLEDGE (EPIGNOSIS) OF JESUS CHRIST...

1. As noted in a previous study, Peter uses the word "epignosis" in the phrase "the knowledge of Jesus Christ" - cf. **2 Pe 1:2,3,8**
2. The word **epignosis** {ep-ig'-no-sis} means "to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, know well" (Thayer)
- **Such knowledge comes only as we demonstrate all eight of the "Christ-like graces" in our lives**

B. KNOWLEDGE (GNOSIS) IS JUST ONE ELEMENT...

1. Peter uses the word "gnosis" when he tells us to add knowledge to virtue - **2 Pe 1:5**
2. The word **gnosis** {gno'-sis} means "a seeking to know, an inquiry, investigation" (Vine)
3. This word conveys the normal idea of knowledge: "awareness through study and experience" (Wycliffe)
- **This knowledge pertains to understanding the will of God and the way of salvation through Jesus Christ - cf. Lk 1:77; Ph 3:8**

[So we are add to our **faith** and **virtue** that **knowledge** (gnosis) or information necessary to truly know (epignosis) Jesus Christ. The importance of knowledge is seen further as we consider...]

II. THE DEMAND OF KNOWLEDGE

A. GOD DEMANDS HIS PEOPLE TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE...

1. He expected it of Israel - cf. **Deu 6:6-9**
2. He foretold that it would be a characteristic of the New Covenant - cf. **Jer 31:31-34**
- **To be pleasing to the Lord, we must have a knowledge of His will - Co 1:9-10**

B. GOD IS DISPLEASED WITH LACK OF KNOWLEDGE...

1. Israel was destroyed because of their lack of knowledge - **Hos 4:1,6; 6:4-6**
2. Jesus will come in judgment against those who do not know God - **2 Th 1:8-9**
- **Without knowledge, all the sincerity and zeal in the world is in vain! - Ro 10:1-3**

[Since a knowledge of God and His will is so important, how does "add" knowledge...?]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

A. THE SOURCE FOR KNOWLEDGE...

1. Jesus is the ultimate source of true knowledge - cf. **Co 2:1-3**
 - a. Which makes the New Testament essential
 - b. For it contains the only reliable source of information concerning His teachings while on earth and later through His apostles
2. The OT is also the source of knowledge - cf. **2 Ti 3:14-17**
 - a. Not only for information about Christ and His salvation
 - b. But also for that which makes the man of God complete
- **The knowledge which we are to add to our faith and virtue is found only in the pages of God's Word!**

B. THE SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE...

1. In our desire to obtain knowledge, certain attitudes are necessary:
 - a. A heart that longs and searches for knowledge - **Pro 2:3-6**; cf. **1 Pe 2:2**
 - b. A mind that values knowledge more highly than gold - **Pro 8:10-11**
 - c. A love for instruction - **Pro 12:1**
2. A person with these attitudes will:
 - a. Make daily Bible reading a priority in their life!
 - b. Utilize every opportunity to study the Word of God alone, and with others!
 - c. Not take such opportunities for granted
- **Do we demonstrate that acquiring knowledge of God's Word is a priority?**

[If one is diligent in their study of God's Word, their progress will be evident (cf. **1 Ti 4:15-16**). Of course, the reverse is just as true (sadly). Finally, perhaps a caution or two about...]

IV. THE DANGER OF KNOWLEDGE

A. KNOWLEDGE CAN MAKE ONE ARROGANT...

1. Knowledge has the potential to produce arrogance - cf. **1 Co 8:1-2**
 - a. It can "puff up" rather than "build up" (edify)
 - b. "A little learning is a dangerous thing." - Pope
2. For this reason we must temper knowledge with love and meekness
 - a. Love edifies, and does not puff itself up - cf. **1 Co 8:1; 13:4**
 - b. What knowledge or wisdom we believe we have, should manifest itself in a spirit of meekness - cf. **Ja 3:13,17**
- **There is no virtue in knowledge if it leads to arrogance!**

B. KNOWLEDGE CAN DESTROY A BROTHER...

1. Knowledge can be destructive when misused - cf. **1 Co 8:4-11**
 - a. When we despise the lack of knowledge in others
 - b. When we run roughshod over the weak conscience of others
 2. Such abuse of knowledge produces sin in our lives - cf. **1 Co 8:12-13**
 - a. We can actually sin against Christ!
 - b. Therefore love must properly restrain our use of knowledge - e.g., **Ro 14:14-21**
- **Like a sharp knife, knowledge can be dangerous used improperly!**

CONCLUSION

1. With the proper application of knowledge, however...
 - a. We can build up our faith, as faith comes from God's Word
 - b. We provide direction in which to channel our striving for excellence
2. Are we growing in knowledge...?
 - a. If not, we are setting ourselves up for destruction ("My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...")
 - b. If we are, then we are on the right track ("...you will never stumble")

To our **faith** and **virtue**, therefore, let us be sure to add **knowledge**, that we might truly grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Controlling The Self

INTRODUCTION

1. As people seek to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (**2 Pe 1:5-8**)...
 - a. They begin with the foundation of **faith**:
 - 1) A strong conviction and trust
 - 2) In both God and Jesus Christ
 - b. To which they add the quality of **virtue**:
 - 1) A desire for excellence
 - 2) Striving to become all that Jesus desires of them
 - c. All the while increasing in **knowledge**:
 - 1) Gaining awareness and understanding through study and experience
 - 2) Especially regarding the will of God and the way of salvation
2. As knowledge increases, they are to add **self-control** (temperance, KJV); which makes sense...
 - a. What good is it to grow in knowledge of good and evil...
 - b. ...if we do not have the ability to make proper use of such knowledge?

[But what exactly is self-control, and how do we add it to our lives? Let's take a closer look...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF SELF-CONTROL

A. THE GREEK WORD IS ENKRATEIA...

1. From the word **kratos**, meaning "strength"
2. As defined by various scholars:
 - a. "one holding himself in" (Robertson)
 - b. "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passion, especially his sensual appetites" (Thayer)
 - c. "Where this virtue subsists (abides), temptation can have little influence" (MacKnight)

B. AS FOUND IN THE NT...

1. **Ac 24:25** - "the word follows 'righteousness', which represents God's claims, self-control being man's response thereto" (Vine)
2. **Ga 5:23** - it is an element of that fruit born by one who is walking by the Spirit
3. **Ti 1:8** - required of one who would serve as an elder
4. **2 Pe 1:6** - "it follows 'knowledge', suggesting that what is learned requires to be put into practice" (Vine)

[Self-control is therefore **the discipline of one's self** so as to live in harmony with the knowledge of right and wrong that one has. The importance of self-control is seen as we consider...]

II. THE DEMAND FOR SELF-CONTROL

A. REQUIRED TO BE CHRIST'S DISCIPLE...

1. Denial of self necessary to follow Jesus - **Lk 9:23**
2. It is an important element of what God's grace teaches us - **Ti 2:11-12**
- **One cannot be a disciple of Jesus without exercising self-control!**

B. REQUIRED TO PREVENT APOSTASY...

1. Paul realized the need to keep his body under control - **1 Co 9:27**
2. Peter's condemnation of false teachers included their becoming enslaved again to the corruption that is in the world - cf. **2 Pe 2:19-20**
- **Just as an athlete must exercise self-control to win the race, so we must have self-control if we desire to obtain an imperishable crown - cf. 1 Co 9:24-25**

[Yet most would agree that controlling the self is easier said than done. Let's take a look at both the problem and the solution regarding...]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONTROL

A. THE PROBLEM OF SELF-CONTROL...

1. The challenge of controlling the self is seen throughout the scriptures
 - a. It is easier to capture a city than to control the spirit! - **Pro 16:32**
 - b. The tongue is just one example of how hard self-control can be - **Ja 1:26; 3:2-10**
2. This challenge is faced by all men
 - a. By those outside of Christ (illustrated in Paul's own life)
 - 1) His dilemma as one who tried to follow the Law of Moses - **Ro 7:14**
 - a) He does that which he knows is wrong - **Ro 7:15-17**
 - b) He fails to do that which he knows is right - **Ro 7:18-19**
 - 2) He was imprisoned by his own body! - **Ro 7:22-24**
 - a) He couldn't control self
 - b) Self controlled him!
 - b. Even for those in Christ
 - 1) The battle rages on
 - a) There is a conflict between the Spirit and our flesh - **Ga 5:16-17**
 - b) There is a war that wages between the flesh and the soul - **1 Pe 2:11**
 - 2) Yet there is hope!
 - a) Hope in Christ, as Paul intimates - **Ro 7:24-25**
 - b) We are no longer indebted to live after the flesh - **Ro 8:12**
 - c) Those in Christ have crucified the flesh - **Ga 5:24**
- **The problem is real, yet the solution comes as we "crucify" the flesh**

B. THE SOLUTION FOR SELF-CONTROL...

1. It begins in baptism
 - a. In baptism, our body of sin is put to death as we are buried into the death of Christ - **Ro 6:3-6**
 - b. As we rise from baptism, we are now free to live for God - **Ro 6:7,12-13**
 - c. Not that we are no longer tempted, but are free from the dominion (rule) of sin - cf. **Ro**

6:14

- d. Note the contrast between one outside of Christ, and one in Christ:
 - 1) Outside of Christ - cf. **Ro 7:23-24**
 - 2) In Christ - cf. **Ro 8:12; 6:14**
- **In baptism we are set free from the dominion of sin; the battle may not be over, but now it can be won!**
- 2. It continues as we are led by the Spirit
 - a. Without the Spirit's help, we will die spiritually - **Ro 8:12-13**
 - b. Walking in the Spirit, we will not succumb to the lust of the flesh - **Ga 5:16-18**
 - c. How does the Spirit lead us?
 - 1) When we set our mind on the things of the Spirit - cf. **Ro 8:5**
 - 2) The "things of the Spirit" include that truth He was sent to reveal - **Jn 16:13**
- **The degree to which we set our minds on what the Spirit has revealed (i.e., the Word of God), to that degree we are led by the Spirit!**
- 3. It continues as we are empowered by the Spirit
 - a. We can do whatever God wills with His help - **Ph 4:13; 2:12-13**
 - b. The Spirit is His agent by which He empowers us - cf. **Ep 3:16,21**
 - c. How does the Spirit empower us?
 - 1) Certainly the Word helps, as it is the sword of the Spirit - cf. **Ep 6:17**
 - 2) Prayer also, as Paul prayed for the Ephesians - cf. **Ep 3:16**
- **What is important is not how the Spirit empowers, but that He does, and that we seek His strength through the Word and prayer!**

[By crucifying the flesh through our union with Christ in baptism, and then Spirit led and Spirit empowered, self-control will be a natural fruit born by the Christian, **Ga 5:22-23**). Finally, some thoughts in regards to...]

IV. THE DISPLAY OF SELF-CONTROL**A. THE PROPER EXERCISE OF SELF-CONTROL...**

- 1. We are to bring the body under subjection - cf. **1 Co 9:27**
- 2. We are to deny ourselves ungodliness and worldly lusts - cf. **Ti 2:11-12; 2 Ti 2:22**
- 3. We are not to be in bondage to anything, even that which lawful - cf. **1 Co 6:12**
- 4. We should be willing to deny self in service to others
 - a. Denying one's pride - cf. **Ph 2:3-4**
 - b. Denying one's liberty to help the weak - cf. **1 Co 8:9-13; Ro 14:14-21**
- **Controlling the self means not only the body, but also the ego!**

B. THE IMPROPER EXERCISE OF SELF-CONTROL...

- 1. Paul warned against the wrong kind of self-control - **Co 2:20-23**
 - a. Restrictions based upon human traditions
 - b. Limitations that neglect the body
- **Such might appear wise, but really don't limit the indulgence of the flesh**
- 2. Paul foretold that this would be a sign of a general apostasy - **1 Ti 4:1-5**
 - a. Not allowing marriage
 - b. Not eating certain meats

-- **Such might appear spiritual, but is contrary to the truth**

CONCLUSION

1. **Controlling the self** is a natural component to growing in the knowledge of Jesus...
 - a. As faith without works is dead, so faith without self-control is meaningless
 - b. Striving for excellence (virtue) is not possible without the discipline of self-control
 - c. Increasing in knowledge is nothing but an academic exercise, unless we are able to apply that knowledge by exercising self-control

2. As we seek to develop **self-control** in our lives...
 - a. Remember the promise of our baptism (a new life free from sin's dominion!)
 - b. Walk after the Spirit (by setting your mind on the things of the Spirit)
 - c. Be empowered by the Spirit through the Word of God and prayer

3. Be careful to **properly channel** what **self-control** is developed...
 - a. Not to follow human traditions, nor to seek the praise of men
 - b. But to humbly pursue godliness, and serve our fellow man

In this way we develop that Christ-like character, coming to truly know Him who through self-control offered Himself in service to His Father and for sinners.

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Bearing Up Under Trials

INTRODUCTION

1. We have observed that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ...
 - a. Begins with the foundation of **faith** (conviction and trust)
 - b. To which we add the quality of **virtue** (striving for excellence)
 - c. Manifested by increasing in **knowledge** (regarding God's will)
 - d. To which we add the grace of **self-control** (mastering one's desires and passions)

2. In our text (**2 Pe 1:5-8**), we note that to self-control we are to add **perseverance**...
 - a. The KJV renders it **patience** (as does the NKJV in many places)
 - b. The RSV has the word **steadfastness**

[What comes to mind when you hear these words? How does this relate to self-control? Are you adding perseverance to your life as a Christian? Let's begin our study with...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF PERSEVERANCE

A. THE GREEK WORD IS HUPOMONE...

1. Literally, "an abiding under"
2. Strong defines the word as "a cheerful (or hopeful) endurance"
3. It implies suffering, enduring, or waiting, as a determination of the will and not simply under necessity (ISBE)

B. MORE THAN JUST A PASSIVE VIRTUE...

1. In the **passive** sense, it would be like a ship anchored in a storm
 - a. Under attack by the wind and waves
 - b. Yet remaining secured to that one spot by the anchor
-- This is good as far as it goes, but the word implies more!
2. In the **active** sense, it is like a ship sailing despite the storm
 - a. Under attack by the same wind and waves
 - b. But pressing on to its destination despite the obstacles
-- It involves more than just a "grin and bear it" attitude!
3. Adam Clarke describes it as "bearing all trials and difficulties with an even mind, enduring in all, and persevering through all"
 - a. Exemplified by Jesus - cf. **He 12:1-2**
 - b. Also by Paul - cf. **2 Ti 3:10-11**

[Perseverance is not simply bearing with trials, but "**bearing up under trials.**" And it is a quality required of Christians...]

II. THE DEMAND FOR PERSEVERANCE

A. NECESSARY FOR MATURE GROWTH...

1. We must allow patience (hupomone) to develop a mature character - **Ro 5:4; Ja 1:4**
2. We must bear fruit with patience (hupomone) - **Lk 8:15**

B. NECESSARY TO ENDURE TRIALS...

1. Perseverance helped the Thessalonians to endure trials - **2 Th 1:4**
2. Even as it helped Job to endure his trials - cf. **Ja 5:11**

C. NECESSARY FOR ETERNAL LIFE...

1. We must be patient (hupomone) in doing good to receive eternal life - **Ro 2:7**
2. We must have patience (hupomone) to receive the promise - **He 10:36**

[If we hope to grow, endure difficulties, and eventually receive the promise, we must "add" the quality of perseverance to our character! How does one do this...?]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSEVERANCE

A. THE RIGHT ELEMENTS...

1. The Word of God, which provides patience (hupomone) and hope - **Ro 15:4**
2. A strong hope, which helps us to wait eagerly with perseverance - **Ro 8:25**
3. Prayer certainly helps, as Paul prayed for the Colossians - **Co 1:11**
4. Even tribulations themselves - **Ro 5:3; Ja 1:3**
 - a. Tribulations produce perseverance
 - b. Perseverance prepares us for tribulation (as described before)

B. THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE...

1. Looking to Jesus - **He 12:1-4**
 - a. The key to running the race set before us!
 - b. By considering "Him who endured such hostility", we are less likely to grumble and give up
2. Looking to the prophets of old - **Ja 5:10-11**
 - a. Their example of steadfastness should motivate us
 - b. Consider what they patiently endured, and our excuses for lack of perseverance or failure to bear up under trial seem silly and foolish! - cf. **He 11:32-38**
3. Looking to each other - **He 3:12-14; He 10:24-25**
 - a. Encouragement by brethren is a powerful aid to being persistent
 - b. Through daily exhortations and frequent assemblies, we are more likely to bear up under trials
4. Looking at life with a positive attitude - **Ja 1:2-3**
 - a. Trials in life are for my betterment!
 - b. They mold me and make me what God would have me to be!
 - c. Therefore rejoice and glory in tribulations - cf. **Ro 5:3-5**
5. Looking to the future - **2 Co 4:16-18**
 - a. Trials are short and light compared to eternal weight of glory!
 - b. For those who persevere, glory awaits! - cf. **Re 2:25-29; 3:1**

- c. So let the promise of future glory encourage us to persevere!

[Finally, a thought or two about...]

IV. THE DEMONSTRATION OF PERSEVERANCE

A. REQUIRED IN "TRYING" CIRCUMSTANCES...

1. There are times when remaining active for the Lord is difficult
 - a. E.g., during lingering suffering, illness, grief, etc.
 - b. Many Christians make some disappointment, loss, or grief an excuse for shirking their duties to the Lord
2. But to truly demonstrate perseverance...
 - a. We must continue to press on in doing good
 - b. We can work for God, even if we are laid up in bed (as did one sister, who prayed for the work being done by others)

B. REQUIRED IN "TEMPTING" CIRCUMSTANCES...

1. Needed when faced with earthly delights, pleasures, seductions of the world
2. Such distractions are just as dangerous as tribulation in rendering us unfruitful - cf. **Lk 8:14**
3. "Just as the dark clouds of trial may render us inactive, so may the dazzling brightness of temptations blind us and render us useless." (Alexander MacLaren)

CONCLUSION

1. **Perseverance** involves the idea of bearing up under trials and pressing on...
 - a. In times of tribulation, it means to spurn the trials
 - b. In times of temptation, it means to turn our backs on them
 - All the while continuing to do good as the Lord directs
2. In a sense, it is an extended version of **self-control**...
 - a. Self-control is a daily exercise
 - b. Perseverance is self-control exercised today, tomorrow, the next day, and so on
 - Which is why we need to "add" perseverance to self-control - cf. **2 Pe 1:6**
3. Are we living the Christian life with perseverance?
 - a. May we pray that we all have "the patience of Christ" - **2 Th 3:5**
 - b. May we heed the admonition given to Timothy to "pursue...patience" - **1 Ti 6:11**

As we develop "the patience of Christ", we will continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ!

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Seeking To Please God

INTRODUCTION

1. Remember that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ requires...
 - a. The development of eight graces
 - b. In conjunction with each other
 - c. With all diligence
 - Where we gradually produce a Christ-like character

2. Reasons to grow in this knowledge include...
 - a. Grace and peace are multiplied in this knowledge
 - b. All things pertaining to life and godliness are provided through this knowledge
 - c. Spiritual myopia and amnesia are avoided by this knowledge
 - d. We will never stumble if we abound in this knowledge
 - e. An abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom will be ours!

3. Thus the development of a Christ-like character...
 - a. Begins with the foundation of **faith** (conviction and trust)
 - b. To which we add the quality of **virtue** (striving for excellence)
 - c. Manifested by increasing in **knowledge** (regarding God's will)
 - d. To which we add the grace of **self-control** (mastering one's desires and passions)
 - e. Along with the **perseverance** to bear up trials and temptations

4. As we continue with our text (**2 Pe 1:5-8**), we see that we are to add **godliness....**
 - a. Note that it is connected with perseverance
 - b. We shall observe that this is a very logical connection

[As we've done previously, let's first seek to discern the meaning of the word...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF GODLINESS

A. THE GREEK WORD IS EUSEBIA...

1. Literally, it means "to worship well", "to be very devout"
2. Vine describes it as denoting "that piety which, characterized by a God-ward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him"
3. ISBE describes it as "character and conduct determined by the principle of love or fear of God in the heart"
- **We might summarize it as pious conduct done with a desire to please God**

B. CONTRASTED WITH HYPOCRISY...

1. There is pious conduct or godliness that is hypocritical
 - a. Against which Paul warned - **2 Ti 3:1-5**

- b. Displayed by those who are "lovers of pleasure" rather than "lovers of God"
 - 1) Such piety or godliness is just an outward form
 - 2) Done only to be seen by others, to impress them, for the purpose of self-glorification
 - c. Against which Jesus warned - **Mt 6:1-18**
 - 2. True godliness is characterized by a "God-ward attitude"
 - a. I.e., seeking to be seen and approved by God, not man
 - b. Devoted to the will of God, desiring to please Him
- **Unless we have this "God-ward attitude", any act of piety is simply hypocrisy**

C. CONNECTED WITH PERSEVERANCE...

- 1. **Perseverance** (bearing up under trials) is commendable, if done for the right reason - cf. **1 Pe 2:18-20**
- 2. The right reason to persevere is **godliness!**
 - a. Persevering out of a desire to please God
 - b. Not to please man or ourselves

[Therefore it is essential that we add **godliness** to **perseverance**, or we will be bearing up under trials for all the wrong reasons! There is more to be said about...]

II. THE DEMAND FOR GODLINESS

A. NECESSARY TO BE A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST...

- 1. Remember that godliness is pious conduct done with a desire to please God
 - 2. Jesus had this desire to please His heavenly Father - **Jn 8:29**
 - 3. If we are to be Jesus' disciples, we must seek to please God, not men - **Ga 1:10**
 - 4. The apostles' taught the disciples that they might please God - **1 Th 4:1-2**
- **Unless it is for the purpose of pleasing God, all our piety is in vain!**

B. PROFITABLE FOR ALL THINGS...

- 1. Paul wrote how godliness was profitable for all things - **1 Ti 4:7-8; 6:6**
 - a. Profitable for the life that now is - cf. **Mt 6:33; Mk 10:28-30**
 - b. Profitable for the life to come - cf. **Mk 10:30; Ro 6:22**
 - 2. Peter wrote of how it was beneficial in view of the things to come - **2 Pe 3:10-14**
 - a. The universe, the earth, and all its works will be destroyed
 - b. For this reason we should focus on holy conduct and godliness, which gives promise of the life to come (the new heavens and new earth)
- **Godliness is the only true wealth worth striving for!**

C. A SOURCE FOR POWER...

- 1. Paul warned about those with a form of godliness, but denying its power - **2 Ti 3:5**
 - a. Implied is that there is true godliness
 - b. And this true godliness contains "power"
- 2. Indeed, if our conduct pleases God, He empowers us!
 - a. He works in us as we strive to do His will - **Ph 2:12-13**
 - b. He strengthens us by His Spirit in the inner man - cf. **Ep 3:16**

- c. With a power beyond comprehension - **Ep 3:20**
- d. Enabling us to stand strong in the strength of His might - **Ep 6:10-13**
- **Do we desire power from God in our daily living? Then godliness is necessary!**

[How does one go about the task of "adding" godliness to their life...?]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GODLINESS

A. REQUIRES EXERCISE...

- 1. As Paul counseled Timothy - **1 Ti 4:7-8**
 - a. Just as physical exercise provides benefit for healthy living
 - b. Even more so, spiritual exercise provides benefit for godly living
- 2. The type of spiritual exercise needed - cf. **1 Ti 4:12-16**
 - a. Set a good example for others
 - b. Give attention to reading (esp. the Word of God), exhortation, doctrine
 - c. Make good use of your abilities and opportunities
 - d. Focus your efforts on such things, and your progress will be evident
- **As Peter would say, it requires "giving all diligence" - cf. 2 Pe 1:5**

B. REQUIRES ABSTINENCE...

- 1. From disputes and arguments over words - **1 Ti 6:3-4**
- 2. From men who wrangle over words - **1 Ti 6:5**
- 3. From materialism and the love of money - **1 Ti 6:6-10**
- **Yes, we must flee these things, all the while pursuing godliness! - 1 Ti 6:11**

[Finally, a few thoughts about...]

IV. THE DISPLAY OF GODLINESS

A. WE MUST GUARD OUR MOTIVES...

- 1. Many people are pious, having a form of godliness, but for the wrong reason
 - a. They view it as a means of gain - cf. **1 Ti 6:5**
 - b. For some, to get wealthy
 - c. For others, to get healthy
 - d. For others, to get popularity
- 2. There is only one proper motive for pious conduct
 - a. To please God!
 - b. This is the motive that pleases God
- **The display of true godliness will be for one reason, to glorify God!**

B. WE MUST NOT DENY ITS POWER...

- 1. Some have a form of godliness, but deny its power - cf. **2 Ti 3:5**
 - a. They think that they can do it on their own
 - b. They do not acknowledge the need for God's help
- 2. As we seek to be godly, we must acknowledge God's help - cf. **Ph 4:13**
 - a. By His grace we can become what He wants us to be

- b. By His Spirit we can become godly - cf. **Ro 8:13-14**
- **What degree of true godliness we may attain, is possible only with God's help!**

CONCLUSION

1. It is God's desire that we live godly lives, and for this end we are told to pray:

*"...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."
- cf. 1 Ti 2:1-3*

2. It is our desire to please Him that sanctifies our conduct...
 - a. Making our efforts holy conduct
 - b. Rather than self-righteous acts done to earn salvation, impress others, or some other personal gain
3. Can we see why we must add godliness as we seek to grow in the knowledge of Christ?
 - a. As we strive for excellence (virtue)...
 - b. As we increase in knowledge...
 - c. As we display self-control...
 - d. As we bear up under trials (perseverance)...-- It is godliness (pious conduct seeking to please God) that ensures that our efforts will not be for the wrong reasons

May we therefore add godliness to perseverance as we seek to grow in both grace and knowledge while waiting for our Lord's return:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ," - Ti 2:11-13

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Loving The Brethren

INTRODUCTION

1. Growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ has an **inward** focus as evidenced by...
 - a. Building upon one's personal faith
 - b. Striving for excellence as an individual goal
 - c. Increasing one's own knowledge
 - d. Controlling the passions and desires of the self
 - e. Bearing up under trials with a positive attitude
2. It also has an **upward** focus...
 - a. With the addition of godliness
 - b. I.e., a pious conduct based upon a desire to be pleasing to God
3. Then there is the **outward** focus...
 - a. With the addition of **brotherly kindness** - **2 Pe 1:7**
 - b. Followed with the addition of **love** - **2 Pe 1:7**
-- Both affecting how we act towards other people

[In this study we will direct our attention to **brotherly kindness**, certainly a necessary element in developing a Christ-like character...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS

A. THE GREEK WORD IS PHILADELPHIA...

1. A compound involving two words:
 - a. "phileo" (love)
 - b. "adelphos" (brother)
2. It literally means "the love of brothers"

B. AS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. It describes the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren (Thayer)
2. Christians were charged to display this virtue - **He 13:1**
3. They were to increase in it more and more - **1 Th 4:9-10**
4. They had been purified for this very purpose - **1 Pe 1:22**
5. **Ro 12:10** reveals that it is through brotherly kindness we can have "kind affection" toward one another

[It is **brotherly kindness**, therefore, that provides a true sense of family in our association as members of the Lord's body. Why is such love of the brethren important...?]

II. THE DEMAND OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS

A. NECESSARY TO KNOW GOD...

1. Without sincere love for brethren, any claim to know God or love Him is impossible - cf. **1 Jn 4:7-8,20-21**
2. If we truly desire to know God (and grow in the knowledge of Jesus), then it is essential to develop brotherly kindness!

B. NECESSARY TO BE JESUS' DISCIPLES...

1. Jesus made love for brethren an identifying mark by which the world can know we are His disciples - **Jn 13:34-35**
 - a. Right doctrine is certainly important - **2 Jn 9**
 - b. But the world pays little attention to what is perceived as minor doctrinal differences
 - c. What people do notice is love in a world filled with hate
 - d. Especially when such love is observed among individuals who come from various social, economic, and racial backgrounds
2. Any attempt to proclaim New Testament Christianity...
 - a. Will fail to appeal to those in the world
 - b. Unless it is accompanied by a visible demonstration of true brotherly kindness among Christians!

C. NECESSARY TO ANSWER JESUS' PRAYER FOR UNITY...

1. Unity among brethren is also very important, as indicated in the prayer of Jesus - **Jn 17:20-23**
2. The unity made possible through the cross of Christ is maintained as we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace - **Ep 4:3**
3. Crucial to that endeavor is "bearing with one another in love" - **Ep 4:2**
 - a. There will be times when brethren sin against one another
 - b. Where brotherly kindness prevails there will also be forbearance and forgiveness
 - c. This provides time for repentance and reconciliation necessary to remain united
4. Unless we develop brotherly kindness, churches will be prone to split at the earliest indication of conflict!

[I trust that we see the importance of adding brotherly kindness. How does one go about doing this...?]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS

A. REQUIRES PURITY OF SOUL...

1. Brotherly kindness can easily be misdirected, especially in a sex-crazed society
 2. Through obedience to the gospel, our souls are purified - **1 Pe 1:22-23**
 - a. We have been born again by incorruptible seed
 - b. Sincere and fervent love of the brethren is now possible
- **If we desire true brotherly kindness, make sure that we have purity of soul!**

B. REQUIRES BEING TAUGHT BY GOD...

1. Those taught by God need little to be said - cf. **1 Th 4:9-10**

2. The Father teaches the meaning of love through the giving of His Son - **1 Jn 4:9-10**
3. The Son demonstrates true love by the example of His sacrifice - **1 Jn 3:16**
- **The more we reflect upon the love and sacrifice of Jesus, the sooner we understand the true meaning of brotherly kindness - cf. Jn 13:34**

C. REQUIRES SPENDING TIME WITH BRETHREN...

1. This I have gleaned from personal experience
 - a. The more I am around people...
 - b. The more I come to know them personally...
 - c. The more I share experiences with them (both good and bad)...
 - The easier I find it to "fall in love" with them!
2. It is not much different than with one's own physical family
 - a. I had no choice who my three physical brothers would be
 - b. But as we experience life together our love and appreciation for one another deepens
- **I find it to be the same with my brethren in Christ; spend time together!**

D. REQUIRES PRAYING FOR BRETHREN...

1. This also is gleaned from personal experience
2. Pray fervently for your brethren, especially those with whom you may have a personality clash
3. It is hard to remain angry or maintain a strong dislike for someone when you spend time praying for them
- **"Pray for one another" (Ja 5:16), and there will be brotherly kindness!**

[Finally, a few thoughts about...]

IV. THE DISPLAY OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS

A. AS IT AFFECTS OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD BRETHREN...

1. Brotherly kindness will lead one to be **considerate**
 - a. A brother who is strong will be considerate of his weak brother - **Ro 15:1**
 - b. Where a brother may have liberty in Christ, he is willing to limit that freedom if it is beneficial to the spiritual well-being of his brother - **1 Co 8:13; Ga 5:13**
2. Brotherly kindness that will lead one to be **cautious**
 - a. About what they say about them - **Ja 4:11a**
 - b. About judging a brother - **Ja 4:11b-12**

B. AS IT AFFECTS OUR SERVICE TOWARD BRETHREN...

1. Brotherly kindness will lead us to **truly care for one another** - **1 Th 5:14**
 - a. To warn the unruly, to comfort the faint-hearted
 - b. To uphold the weak, to be patient with all
2. Brotherly kindness will prompt us to **pursue the right things** - **Ro 14:19**
 - a. Things that make for peace
 - b. Things by which we may edify one another

CONCLUSION

1. As we give thought to...
 - a. What it means to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - b. What it means to develop a Christ-like character
 - May we appreciate the importance of developing a strong love for the brethren!

2. We may think that we have a strong love for the brethren...
 - a. Indeed we might
 - b. But we need to always increase more and more! - cf. **1 Th 4:9-10**

And so may this prayer be fulfilled in us:

"...may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." - 1 Th 3:12-13

Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

With Active Good Will Towards All

INTRODUCTION

1. As noted throughout this series, growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ involves the development of a Christ-like character...
 - a. A development that requires diligence
 - b. A character that includes eight graces working together in spiritual harmony

2. This Christ-like character is developed through...
 - a. Building On Faith (**faith**)
 - b. Striving For Excellence (**virtue**)
 - c. Increasing In Knowledge (**knowledge**)
 - d. Controlling The Self (**self-control**)
 - e. Bearing Up Under Trials (**perseverance**)
 - f. Seeking To Please God (**godliness**)
 - g. Loving The Brethren (**brotherly kindness**)

3. But this "spiritual construction project" is not complete without the addition of **love**...
 - a. Which serves as the epitome of Peter's list of graces
 - b. Which must be something special, for it is often exalted above other graces
 - 1) Exalted above faith and hope - **1 Co 13:13**
 - 2) Given first place in what constitutes the fruit of the Spirit - **Ga 5:22**
 - 3) To be adorned "above all" the graces mentioned by Paul - **Co 3:14**

[What is "**love**", and how is it any different than "**brotherly kindness**"...?]

I. THE DEFINITION OF LOVE

A. THE GREEK WORD IS AGAPE...

1. One of four Greek words translated love
 - a. **philia** - the love of close friends or brothers
 - b. **storge** - the love of family
 - c. **eros** - carnal or sexual love
 - d. **agape** - love which seeks the highest good of others
 - 1) Not just friends, family, or brethren, but even enemies - cf. **Mt 5:44**
 - 2) Thus it is a **higher form of love** than "brotherly kindness" (love of brothers)
2. It can be said that **agape** love:
 - a. Does not depend upon the one being loved as having earned such love
 - b. Is not an exclusive love (brothers only), but an all-embracing benevolence
 - c. Is not an uncontrolled reaction of the heart, but a concentrated exercise of will
 - d. Is a caring love, one which becomes involved in the needs of others

-- **Perhaps the simplest definition is the one often given: "active good will"**

B. BEST EXEMPLIFIED BY THE FATHER AND THE SON...

1. God the Father demonstrated **agape** love
 - a. His love for sinners is completely undeserved by them - **Ro 5:8**
 - b. Naturally, His love is called a "great" love - **Ep 2:4-7**
 2. God the Son demonstrated **agape** love
 - a. By laying down His life for us - **1 Jn 3:16**
 - b. There is no "greater" love - **Jn 15:13**
- **Truly the Father and the Son have exemplified "active good will" towards all!**

[Since the Father and the Son have shown "active good will" towards all, we should not be surprised that it is required of those who would be Jesus' disciples...]

II. THE DEMAND OF LOVE

A. NECESSARY TO BE SONS OF GOD...

1. Jesus commanded His disciples to love their enemies - **Mt 5:43-44**
 2. In showing "active good will" to our enemies...
 - a. We will be like our Father in heaven - **Mt 5:45**
 - b. We will be different than those who love only their friends - **Mt 5:46-47**
 - c. We will be perfect (complete) in the area of love and mercy, even as our Father in heaven is perfect (merciful) - **Mt 5:58; cf. Lk 6:35-36**
- **Jesus expects us to follow God's example of "active good will" towards all!**

B. NECESSARY COMPONENT TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE...

1. The **atmosphere** of the Christian life ("walk in love") - **Ep 5:2**
 2. The **garment** of the Christian ("put on love") - **Co 3:14**
 3. The **motive** of Christian service ("done with love") - **1 Co 16:14**
 4. The **glue** of Christian unity ("knit together in love") - **Co 2:2**
 5. The **controller** of Christian liberty ("through love serve one another") - **Ga 5:13**
- **Every facet of our lives is to be governed by "active good will" towards all!**

[As important love is to the Christian life, we can appreciate why Paul says "*the greatest of these is love*" (**1 Co 13:13**) and "*above all these things put on love*" (**Co 3:14**). So how do we go about putting on love, or adding it to brotherly kindness...?]

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOVE

A. LET THE FATHER TEACH YOU...

1. The Thessalonians had been taught by God - cf. **1 Th 4:9-10**
2. How does the Father teach us to love?
 - a. By virtue of His **character**
 - 1) God is love - **1 Jn 4:8**
 - 2) His grace, mercy, longsuffering and abundant goodness are indicative of His love - cf. **Exo 34:5-8**
 - b. By virtue of His **example**

- 1) He sent His only begotten Son - **1 Jn 4:9; Ro 5:8**
 - 2) He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins - **1 Jn 4:10**
- **As the Father "so loved us", let us learn to love others! - 1 Jn 4:11**

B. LET THE SON TEACH YOU...

1. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us" - **1 Jn 3:16**
 2. "Walk in love, as Christ also loved us..." - **Ep 5:2**
 3. "Love one another, as I have loved you" - **Jn 13:34**
- **Contemplate how Jesus died for you, and you will learn the meaning of love!**

C. LET THE APOSTLES TEACH YOU...

1. Paul described what love is - **1 Co 13:4-8a**
 2. Paul prayed for His brethren regarding love
 - a. For the Thessalonians - **1 Th 3:12**
 - b. For the Ephesians - **Ep 3:17-19**
 - c. For the Philippians - **Ph 1:9**
- **Through diligent study of the Word, and fervent prayer, our love will abound still more and more!**

[And finally, some concluding thoughts regarding...]

IV. THE DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE

A. DEMONSTRATING OUR LOVE TOWARD GOD...

1. Some may think we ought to show our love by:
 - a. Shouting if from the rooftop
 - b. Declaring it on bumper sticker ("Honk if you love Jesus!")
 - c. Doing whatever they think pleases God
 2. Proper demonstration of love toward God means:
 - a. Keeping His commandments - cf. **Jn 14:15,21; 1 Jn 5:3**
 - b. Loving the brethren - **1 Jn 4:20-21; 5:1**
- **Do we really love God? Then keep His commandments!**

B. DEMONSTRATING OUR LOVE TOWARD MAN...

1. Begins with keeping the commandments of God ourselves - **1 Jn 5:2**
 2. Not limited to friends and loved ones - **Mt 5:43-48**
 3. Helping to meet their needs - **1 Jn 3:16-18**
- **Do we really love our fellow man? Then love in deed and in truth!**

CONCLUSION

1. As we come to the end of our study, what have we learned about "**Growing In The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ**"...?
 - a. It requires effort ("giving all diligence") - **2 Pe 1:5,10**
 - b. It requires an ever-increasing growth in Christ-like qualities - **2 Pe 1:8**
 - 1) Building on faith (**faith**)

- 2) Striving for excellence (**virtue**)
 - 3) Increasing in knowledge (**knowledge**)
 - 4) Controlling the self (**self-control**)
 - 5) Bearing up under trials (**perseverance**)
 - 6) Seeking to please God (**godliness**)
 - 7) Loving the brethren (**brotherly kindness**)
 - 8) With active good will towards all (**love**)
2. Is the effort worth it? Indeed it is, for as we grow in this knowledge...
- a. The grace and peace of God is multiplied - **2 Pe 1:2**
 - b. All things pertaining to life and godliness are provided - **2 Pe 1:3**
 - c. We can avoid spiritual myopia and spiritual amnesia - **2 Pe 1:9**
 - d. We will never stumble so as to fall - **2 Pe 1:10**
 - e. We will have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom - **2 Pe 1:11**

Therefore I pray that in some way our study has encouraged us to be diligent in supplying these eight graces of Christ-like character in an ever-increasing measure to our lives, mindful of Peter's final admonition:

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." - 2 Pe 3:18