

"The Divine Life" Part 2

Holiness

2 Peter 1:1-9

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Bruce: Hello, guys. How are you doing?

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Well, I trust you have your notes, the handouts that we sent out to you. We'll be in 2 Peter chapter 1. Well, let's pray and ask the Lord to make up the difference.

Gracious and merciful Father, we are glad that You alone are adequate, and not we ourselves. The truth is that while You organize things, You also run things. You also manage things. You also glorify Yourself. We pray, Lord, that in the difficulties of life You would give us flexibility and grace, that we might be able to respond in a way that will call attention to You and Your magnificent character and glory. May it be so this day that You continue to open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Let's look at 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 1-9 today. We've been looking the last couple of weeks at the divine life, a description of God's grace in redemption and salvation and regeneration. And I'm pleased to read to you from the Scripture—2 Peter chapter 1, verses 1-9.

"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fail. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. What a wonderful passage!

One of the great protections afforded us when we study the Scripture expositively, which means that you go verse by verse, and then the content of those verses determines

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what you say,--it's a great protection for us, because it helps us to maintain the proper balance between the truths that we find in the Scripture, within the context of the chapter and within the context of the Bible itself.

Now if I were to have stopped at the end of verse 4 of 2 Peter chapter 1, you might have possibly been left with the very unbalanced picture of the Christian life because of the strong truths that we've been teaching about the divine life in recent weeks. You've heard me preach and teach concerning the divine life. I spoke very strongly about the sovereignty of God in salvation, in bestowing faith upon us. It's the allotted faith that we talked about. It is not something that we achieve. It is something that we receive. It is an allotted faith, as we mentioned in verses 1 and 2.

Now if Peter had stopped at that point, then we would have been in danger of adopting the mindset that says that when God is pleased to convert the heathen, He will do it without you or me being involved. There could be a danger with that. It's an imbalance.

Now that statement is not without truth in itself. It does grasp the truth that it is God who saves us, that He saves us according to His own will and His own pleasure, and that God does not take orders from us in the matter of salvation.

Now we need to understand that. That's what we've been talking about. God does not take orders from us. But there is a point of balance that we need to examine.

It also speaks of the truth that we must never suppose that without our help God would be helpless. God is not helpless. He does not need us. That's one side of the coin.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: But we need to understand the other side of the coin, or we will have imbalance in our understanding. The point of imbalance is that, stated alone,--that God does not need us, that He is not helpless; He doesn't need our help—stated alone, it does not take the church's evangelistic responsibility with equal seriousness.

You've got to understand that. God doesn't need us. But God uses us. God is not helpless. He doesn't need us.

Yet we need to understand the balance of this point. On the one hand, you have the wonderful sovereignty of God. On the other side of the coin, you have the wonderful responsibility of man.

It does not take into consideration that God's way of saving people is to send out His servants to preach the gospel of Christ. And the gospel message and the order to the church is to go into all the world and preach the gospel. If you stop with the sovereignty of God, as we have been talking about in verses 1-4, you will eliminate the balance of understanding that God has ordained, that we are the means by which the gospel is proclaimed. And if we are imbalanced, we will not understand the church's order, which is to go into all the world and preach the gospel of Christ. The church is under orders to go into the world and proclaim the gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now the doctrine of the sovereignty of God would be grossly misapplied if we should invoke it in such a way to lessen the urgency in sharing Christ with the lost. God did not teach us the reality of His rule in order to give us an excuse for neglecting His orders.

Now if the converse would be true, the reverse would also be true. Take a look at verses such as Revelation 3:20. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*" And John 3:16,

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"for God so loved the world," and don't understand them in the context of those verses and keep them in balance, you could be imbalanced in your understanding.

One is likely to conclude that salvation is all of human choice. "Whosoever believes." It's a matter of choice. If you stop at that and don't understand the context of those verses, you will be equally as imbalanced on that side of the coin as you would be if you stopped at the sovereignty of God and avoided the responsibility of man.

If you put the emphasis on anyone of the "whosoever," it does not tell you the *how* of the method of salvation; it only tells you *who*. You've got to be careful about not taking things out of context.

Revelation 3:20—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock"—is not talking about an individual's salvation, of their own will, opening up the door to salvation. It's a letter written to a church, inviting them to restore the fellowship they've already had. They were out of fellowship, and He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." "Come back and have fellowship." This is not an evangelistic verse that says that you have the will to open that door to come to salvation. If you take that position, you're taking things out of context, and you're imbalanced. Then you're regarding salvation solely as an act of man, and not by the grace of God.

And the point of imbalance here, then, is an overemphasis on human responsibility. We have to be careful of that. And with that imbalance, one is likely to regard his job as not simply to proclaim Christ, but actually to produce converts, and to evangelize, not faithfully by proclaiming the truth of God, but by successfully determining numbers that you've achieved, earning their salvation by making a choice.

This mindset would produce calculated and pragmatic evangelism in two areas, if you focus strictly on the responsibility of man. You would create a means of sharing the gospel. You would schedule meetings and say, "This is how I'm going to share the gospel."

Now I'm not saying that you don't do that. All I'm saying is that if your calculated and pragmatic way of saying it is that I need to be converting people, then I'm going to schedule something where I can convert them. That's one thing that might happen with that imbalance.

You would also have an irresistible technique for inducing a response. In other words, it is my job to get them to respond, which means that the success would be calculated by visible results.

You see, if you are imbalanced on the side of the responsibility of man, the only way you can evaluate your effectiveness is to look at numbers. Is there a visible response? If there is no response, then I must have done something wrong. But if there is a response, I must have done something right. That's the imbalance, if you take a look at this and say that it's all of human responsibility. If the efforts did not bear fruit, you begin to look at different techniques.

I've been recently called on by an organization, a worldwide evangelistic campaign. They're trying to get me involved. They're always inviting me to come down to Atlanta and see them. I met them about thirty-five or forty years ago when I was in the Navy. I

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happened to give them a hundred dollars. (*Laughter.*) And forty-five years later, they're still after me. (*Laughter.*)

And here is what they say. "We're after technique, not theology."

Men: Oh!

Bruce: "It's all technique. Let us come and tell you our technique, because we're working with Muslims. We're working with Jews. We're working with all sorts of people all over the world, because we have got the right technique. And we understand that you're a teacher of the Scripture, and we want to show you our technique so that you can become more effective." (*Laughter.*)

Now I'm not saying that I'm the most effective guy in the world. That's not my point. My point is this. Their mindset is this. It's our responsibility to come up with a technique that is going to generate a response, because all they talk about is the responses they get.

My question was, "What theology do you teach?"

"It's not about theology, Bruce. It's about technique. Come and listen to us about the techniques that we've learned for forty-five years, about how we can lead people to Christ and get them to make a decision."

Well, as my Doberman, Derk did years ago when he would get angry, he would get this little fur on the back of his head. And then he would start telling me, "Dad, I've got this little fur on the back of my head." (*Laughter.*)

You see, there is an imbalance there. And one of Satan's great techniques, friends, is this. He is going to get you to take one point of theology, accentuating it so much that you become imbalanced, and lose the whole sight of the balance of Scripture.

Now that's the danger we have with this passage in 2 Peter chapter 1. If you stop at verse 4, you have the tendency to think that man has no responsibility at all for evangelism, because it's all the sovereignty of God. He'll save the person when He wants to, and we're not needed at all. If you stop with that, you're imbalanced.

The other side of the coin is this. Follow me and my technique. And if I don't get the right response, I'm going to change my technique. That's equally imbalanced. That's why we have to study this passage in its context, verses 1-9, in their totality.

Essentially, what it means is this. Evangelism, if it is imbalanced on the side of the responsibility of man, you are battling the other person's will. And it's me against you. It's my will against your will. Who is going to have the greater will? It's the one who hangs in there the longest. And, in a sense, that's what they're doing. If I can win the battle, I will win them to Christ.

But that's very, very dangerous. That's terrifyingly close to the technique of brainwashing. It's almost brainwashing, because it's basically this. I'm up against you. It's my will against your will.

Now both ingredients of Biblical truth must be kept in balance—the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man—not trying to offset one against the other, or defining one at the expense of the other.

Let me read what J. I. Packer says about this balance. "It is necessary, therefore, to take the thought of human responsibility as it affects both the preacher and the hearer of the gospel very seriously indeed. But we must not let it drive the thought of divine

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sovereignty out of our minds. While we must always remember that it is our responsibility to proclaim salvation, we must never forget that it is God who saves. It is God who brings men and women under the sound of the gospel, and it is God who brings them to faith in Christ. Our evangelistic effort, our evangelistic work, is the instrument that He uses for this purpose. But the power that saves is not in the instrument. It's not in the technique. We must not at any stage forget that. For if we forget that it is God's prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure the responses we want. And if we forget that only God can give faith, we shall start to think that the making of converts depends in the last analysis not on God, but on us. And that decisive factor is the way in which we evangelize, because we know that it depends upon us. And this line of thought, consistently followed through, will lead us far astray from the gospel of Christ."

It's a very powerful balance statement that he makes. Once, Charles Spurgeon was asked, "How do you reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man? How do you reconcile that?"

And Spurgeon's curt response was this. "I never reconcile friends." Friends don't need reconciliation! You don't need to balance the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. It's already balanced. What we need to do is to teach it in its context expositively in the Scripture, so that you see it in verses 1-9. You don't just stop at verse 4. Nor do you pick it up at verse 5 and eliminate the first four verses. As Spurgeon said, "There is no need to reconcile friends."

So if we're going to maintain Biblical balance, when teaching about the divine life as we've been discussing it so far, Peter covers both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man in the same verses. Yes, sir?

Participant: 2 Corinthians 5, verse 19. "*God was reconciling the world to Himself.*" And later on, in verse 20, "*Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us.*"

Bruce: Amen. That's a good correlation.

Participant: There's the balance right there.

Bruce: It's the balance you get. Remember this. God is the One who saves. We just happen to be the means by which He does it. The grace of God is the means by which He does it. We are the instruments that He uses to communicate the grace of God in salvation. We're only the instruments. We're not the means. Who is the means?

Participant: God.

Bruce: God is the means. We are the instruments that God uses. That is the point that Peter is going to teach us about divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

And that's why we need to look at this, verses 1-9, in the same context.

In verses 1-4 we have the divine provision that we've talked about, which we call the divine implantation. You'll see that on your notes. Verses 1-4 is what I call the divine implantation. That is the allotted life that we discussed. It's where God gives His life to us. It's where He plants within us His divine nature. He gives us both the desire and the power to do God's will. Would somebody read Philippians chapter 2, verses 12 and 13. These are probably the best verses that describe the balance that you have in the

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sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Philippians 2:12-13. Would somebody read that, please? I want you to read it because I want you to know where to find it.

Participant: *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling."*

Bruce: Now stop. Whose responsibility is that?

Participant: Ours.

Bruce: That's a job we have to do. Now read on.

Participant: *"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose."*

Bruce: Now brothers, right there, in my mind, is one of the best verses you will find on the balance of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. You and I need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. I've got to work at that. But I need to realize this. God is the one who is working in me. He gives you the will to be willing.

Participant: Do you understand that? He gives you the will to want to be willing to work at it! But if you don't have the willingness, where do you get the will? That's His job. That's what He gives us. That's the whole thing of regeneration. He gives us the willingness to be willing to do it. He has the power to do that. Would you read that last verse again, Tom?

Tom: *"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose."*

Bruce: Now as we study these verses, 1-9, the duality of the responsibility of man, human responsibility and divine sovereignty, I want you to remember Philippians 2:12-13. That's a critical passage. It's a wonderful summary statement of everything we're going to learn in these next couple of weeks.

Now remember how we've discussed the divine life, the divine implantation? It's an allotted life. God gives us saving faith. It's an equal life. It's precious to God. Our salvation is precious to Him, just as much as the apostles. Salvation is pleasing to Him.

It's an acquaintance life. It's a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. It's a relationship to God the Father through God the Son.

And notice the privileges we talked about previously. It's a provided life. Everything we need for life and godliness is given to us.

It's a participating life. He shares His divine nature with us. It's a delivered life. He rescues us from the corruption of this world.

Now that's what we've learned so far about the sovereignty of God. Now in verses 5-9, we have the human responsibility as a result of the sovereignty of God. Which comes first?

Participant: The sovereignty of God.

Bruce: That's right. The sovereignty of God comes first. Now we then have the willingness to be willing to do it because He gives us the will to do that. And that is seeing to it that the various Christian graces are included in our lifestyle, as a result of the divine provision that God gives us.

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In other words, we have a divinely provided life. All the things you need for life and godliness, we're told, are given to us. That means that you've been given the willingness to work on these things so that these graces, which he is going to teach us about,—which is our human responsibility,—these graces become paramount in our lives because of the divine implantation. It's evidence of our salvation. Do you see that? It's a consequence.

First of all, we understand the divine implantation. It's God's gift. And then we see verses 5-9—man's responsibility. And Peter has already said that God gives us everything we need for life and godliness.

The divine implantation, then, is this—that everything that helps a person to live to the highest quality God has given us. That's the divine implantation.

Now the next thing we need to talk about is the human utilization. How do we utilize that which God has given us? And so, in the next balancing verses, Peter begins to teach us that, on this very account, or for this very reason, because you have all these promises for such a life already given you, you have a responsibility to act it out and work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Because of our new birth and the precious promises and the divine power God has offered us in Christ, we now have a responsibility.

And that means this, men—that we can't sit back and rest in the context of a God-given faith alone. The grace of God demands just as much as it enables effort on our part. It demands, but it also enables.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: One of my Puritan friends describes it this way. This one is Christopher Love.

"The divine nature is not an automatic self-propelling machine that will turn out a Christian life for the believer, irrespective of what that believer does, or the attitude he takes to the salvation which God has given him so graciously. The divine nature will always produce a change in the life of the sinner who receives the Lord Jesus as Savior and Lord. But it works at its best efficacy when the believer cooperates with it, in not only determining the life that is pleasing to God, but definitely stepping out in faith and living that life in obedience and dependence upon the new life which God has implanted within him.

"And this must not be a mere lackadaisical attempt at doing God's will, but a life characterized by two attitudes or efforts."

And that's where we pick it up in 2 Peter. The first attitude is this--making every effort, and adding more than is required. Those are the two duties that we have. Notice the passage. "*For this reason, make every effort.*" Do more than is required. That becomes the human utilization of how we need to apply these truths. So let's take a look at this human utilization.

"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption of this world because of sinful desire."

"*For this reason.*" That's our responsibility. Notice. "*For this reason,*"—which he just described in verses 3 and 4—"make every effort." Our first duty is this—to make every

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effort to use the graces that God gives us in the implanted salvation He gave us when He regenerated us.

The word is *diligence*, sometimes translated "*make every effort*." The word literally means "to make haste." It means to be eager to do something, to do one's best, to exert oneself. That's what the word *diligence* means.

And so in the divine life, the supreme effort of man must cooperate with the grace of God. Make every effort to cooperate with the grace that God has given you. That's what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You and I work it out with the willingness that God gives us. And we work with Him and cooperate with Him in that effort. And we do it by making every effort that we can, because we're diligent.

There is a diligence factor.

I define diligence in a different way, based upon that word I gave you in the Greek. It means this—viewing each of your assignments in life as a specific assignment, using all your abilities to accomplish it.

Let me give you an illustration from my athletic life. After I graduated from the Academy I was invited to stay back for six months and be the freshman football coach. I put in a new pass offense and then I'd run it for a senior. It's for a quarterback for Navy, a very pass oriented offense.

And they said, "Bruce, you can pick one player to become your defensive coordinator."

Well I think most people thought that I was going to pick our defensive linebacker. But I picked a young man by the name of Bill.

Now I'm going to tell you about Bill. He wasn't the most gifted athlete I ever knew. But he was the most diligent. He only started in his senior year. He played defensive end. He taped his fingers. He taped his wrists. He taped his elbow. He taped his shoulder. He wore a neck harness, taped his knees, taped his ankles, taped his hips. For a football star I told my folks to buy a stock in Johnson and Johnson tape because he would use a lot. (*Laughter.*) He looked like a mummy. (*Laughter.*)

Now let me tell you about his diligence. And the reason I picked him was because of one event I saw him do at the Notre Dame game.

We were playing Notre Dame at South Bend. The Friday before the game we were doing our pre-game warm-up. I'm over here on the right hand side, throwing thirty- and forty yard bombs for my wide receivers. And Bill is standing at the fifty yard line. He took a piece of chalk and he drew a square. He just drew with a piece of chalk. And he stepped in it. This was his pre-game prep.

Well, out of curiosity, I went over and said, "Bill, what in the world are you doing?"

He said, "I'm viewing my task for tomorrow."

I said, "What do you mean? Drawing squares on the football field?"

He said, "No, my task tomorrow is this. When they run the Green Bay sweep, and they pull both guards and lead with their fullback and they pitch out to the halfback, my job tomorrow is to not let them move me off of this piece of ground so Gene can make the tackle." He said, "My job is not to make the tackle. My job is to make sure that I do

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my task well, and that is to not let them move me off of this piece of grass, so somebody else can fulfill his job."

That's diligence. It's viewing each task in your life as a special assignment, and using all of your abilities to accomplish it. That's essentially what Peter is teaching us when he says, "*Make every effort.*" View the assignments that you have in life as a special thing that God has given you and make every effort to accomplish them, using the willingness that God has given you in His sovereign grace.

That's what Christopher Love meant when he said that you're cooperating with God. You're taking the grace that God gives you and you're diligently making every effort to apply it in your life wherever you are for God's glory and your benefit.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: When you're talking here, are you talking about every area of your job? Is that what you're talking about?

Bruce: Yes. That's why I said all of your tasks, whatever they are. You define your tasks—cutting grass, playing golf, going to work, working on your car, helping your children with their homework—whatever it is, whatever task you have. Peter is saying this. You've been regenerated by the sovereignty of God. Make every effort that you can in all the tasks you've been given. Be diligent; make haste. Give your best effort to that so that you will demonstrate the graces that God gives you, and in the midst of that, you'll be demonstrating your conformity to the image of Christ. Make every effort, in all the tasks that you have, to do that. This is all life inclusive. It's not just certain things that are spiritual. Remember, we don't have any compartmentalization between the spiritual and the unspiritual anymore.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: All we have is to love God, to please Him and to enjoy Him forever. That's our task. So make every effort. Philippians 2:12-13 are the verses that will help us to understand that.

In the divine life the supreme effort of man must cooperate with the grace of God. And we do that by making every effort. Faith divinely implanted is not only commitment to the promises of God, but faith is also a commitment to the demands of God. He gives us everything we need for life and godliness. Those are His promises. But with those promises come certain demands and expectations that He has, and that command and expectation is this. Make every effort to cooperate with the grace that I have given you.

So Peter, in balanced theology, is teaching us that faith does not exempt a man from works. The generosity of God does not absolve a man from effort. We are not absolved from effort. Life is at its noblest and its best when our effort is based upon the willingness that God gives us to willingly obey.

Now the original meaning of this word has a very interesting background to it. It has more to do with haste than it does with diligence, making every effort.

The first notion of this word, which we translate as *diligence*, or "*make every effort*," means this—crowding every moment with continuous effort. That's what it means to be diligent. That is our first duty. Crowd every moment with continuous effort.

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So the grand question, then, is how do we do that? If that is the demand that God has upon us because of the sovereign grace that He has implanted within us when we're cooperating with Him because He is giving us the willingness, the will to be willing, how do we do that? Let me offer three considerations for you.

The first one is this. *View the economy of your time as a most precious treasure.* That means that you choose how to use your time wisely. Pick good things to do. Choose wisely.

You know, one of the descriptions of a believer, a follower of Christ in the Scripture, is always by contrast—the saved and the unsaved, the pure and the impure, the holy and the unholy, the righteous and the unrighteous. There is also this—the wise and the foolish. That's the description. The Christian is described as wise, and why is that? Because we have the economy of using our time wisely, because we view time as a precious treasure, because whatever you give your time to will control you.

Secondly for your consideration, I would offer this. In addition to viewing the economy of your time as a precious treasure, *avoid procrastination as a pestilence.* Avoid procrastination. Those things are in contrast to each other. If you're going to use your time wisely, you can't be a procrastinator. It doesn't mean that you run ahead of God. But it also means that you don't let God run ahead of you.

The best illustration of that is John 17, in Jesus' high priestly prayer when He says this. "*I have glorified You on earth by finishing the work You gave me to do.*" We need to be finishers, not procrastinators. That is because we view our time wisely. It doesn't mean that you run ahead of God, but it also means that you don't let God run ahead of you. You run with Him.

Then thirdly, I would suggest this, men. *Remember that human effort is indispensable, even though it's inadequate.* Remember this. Human effort is indispensable, though it's also inadequate. Unless you work on your own faith with haste, crowding every moment with continued effort, by putting forth every effort you can, your faith will not evolve into the graces of character which are designed to conform you to the image of Christ. "*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,*" realizing this—that God is the One who works in you.

Again, a humorous little quote from Charles Spurgeon.

Participant: Could you repeat that last one one more time?

Bruce: Excuse me, please?

Participant: The last one that you just said. Remember, human effort is—

Bruce: Oh, I see. Remember, human effort is indispensable, but it's inadequate. Human effort is indispensable, even though it is inadequate.

Here is a humorous anecdote from Spurgeon's life about being diligent and making every effort. "A neighbor near my study persists in practicing upon the flute. He boars my ears as with an augur." (*Laughter.*) "And he renders it almost an impossibility for me to think. Up and down his scale he runs remorsefully, till even the calamity of temporary deafness would almost be welcome to me." (*Laughter.*)

"Yet he teaches me that I must practice if I would be perfect. I must exercise myself unto godliness if I would be skillful. I must in fact make myself familiar with the word

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of God, with holy living and saintly dying. Such practice, moreover, will be as charming as my neighbor's flute is intolerable." (*Laughter.*)

Basically, he is saying this. "*Make every effort.*" Your every task is a special assignment. And work at it very diligently to complete it.

Do not only make every effort, but also add more than is required. That's verse 5. That's our second duty. Our first duty is to make every effort. Now we come to a second duty that we have in verse 5, and that is to add more than is required.

Look at verse 5, please. "*For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue.*" To supplement means to add. It means to supply in copious measure, to provide beyond the need, to supply more than generously. Not only do we make every effort, but we supply more than generously.

We add to our faith. The word comes to mean generous and costly cooperation. And to illustrate what we are to add in the exercise of our faith, Peter lists graces and qualities which should be found in every healthy believer. And those are the seven virtues that we're going to talk about in the next couple of weeks. And we'll study that individually as we go verse by verse.

So the two things that we are to do are to make every effort and add graciously. Now notice what we're to add.

"*For this very reason, make every effort*"—duty number one—"to add to your faith"—duty number two; here's what you add—virtue. That word means moral excellence. You add moral excellence. "*And moral excellence or virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*"

Now notice. Men, there is a divinely ordained order in those virtues, in those graces of character. First of all, it starts with moral excellence. If you say that you're a follower of Christ, what is the first evidence?

Participant: Morality.

Bruce: Moral excellence. Something changed in you when God regenerated you and He gave you the grace of salvation. All of a sudden, your focus is on His glory, not your own needs, and all of a sudden the conduct of your life changes. Notice the very first thing that he says. If you say you're a Christian, act like it. Your walk must validate your talk. Don't just talk about it, live it. That's what moral excellence means. And we're going to go through each of these individually in future weeks. But I just want to give you the big picture.

Now on top of moral excellence you add what?

Participant: Knowledge.

Bruce: Knowledge. The way this fits together in the Greek text grammatically is this. Characteristic number one leads you to number two and it completes number one. One leads to two; two completes one. Two leads to three; three completes two. Three leads to four; four completes three. Four leads to five; five completes four. Five leads to six; six completes five. And six leads to seven, and seven is it. And brothers, what's the last one?

Men: Love.

"The Divine Life" Part 2

Bruce: Do you know what Peter is telling us? You can teach people how to love. Love can be taught. Love can be learned. It is a grace that God gives us. And it can be learned by understanding this. The very first thing I do is add to my saving faith and practice my moral excellence. Then I go like this, and they fit together like the spokes of a wheel, and the end result is this. You learn how to love!

Peter is saying that the grace of God which causes you to develop being conformed to the image of Christ is to learn how to love like Christ loved. And the way that you do that is to make every effort to add to your faith. You work out your salvation with fear and trembling, realizing this, that God is at work in you to produce these graces in you.

Now I want you to notice the consequence. There is a wonderful cause and effect relationship in these seven graces. Let's pick it up in verse 8.

"*For if these qualities.*" What qualities? The seven we just read. If these qualities are yours and are what?

Participant: Increasing.

Bruce: Increasing. Who's responsibility is it to do that?

Participant: Ours.

Bruce: Ours. We work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We work at this. We make every effort. And we add these things to our faith. "*They keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Do you want to be fruitful? Then work on these seven graces. Do you want to be productive? Work on these seven graces. He uses a double negative. He says that if these are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unproductive. He's basically saying that this is how you become effective and productive, because if you're not doing it, you will be ineffective and unproductive. If you are working on them, you'll be effective and productive. He's basically teaching us how to live an excellent life.

Men, this is how you and I pursue excellence, because we're working on how to love. And when you understand how to love, that's the responsibility that you and I have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling and do that. Work at these things.

And the end result is this. When you learn how to love like Christ loves, you're going to be effective and you're going to be productive.

Now a couple of times I've had the opportunity in corporate America to teach "The Pursuit of Excellence." This is what I teach. I just teach them that here are the seven things you need to work on to be excellent. They mop it up like it's soup. (*Laughter.*)

And they said, "That's wonderful! I've never heard anything like that! Where did you get that?"

I said, "It's plagiarism." (*Laughter.*) That's what good teaching is, men. Good teaching is nothing but plagiarism. You take a message that has already been given and you give it. That's good preaching. (*Laughter.*)

Peter is teaching us this, folks. When you understand the balance of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, and you put those two things together, you're going to become the most effective you can be and the most influential you can be, because you will learn how to—

Men: Love.

"The Divine Life" Part 2

Bruce: Love. *"The greatest of these is love."*

And men, there is a reason that you start with moral excellence. What do you need next to be morally excellent? What do you need?

Participant: Knowledge.

Bruce: You need knowledge! I need to know what I need to do to become morally excellent. So moral excellence leads you to the next thing that you need to work on, and that is knowledge. We'll go through this sequence in future weeks. Knowledge leads to what?

Participant: Self-control.

Bruce: Self-control. A person who has self-control has knowledge in knowing how to act. They all fit together. There is a divine order in this, men. These are not just random words put together. There is a divine order that says that you start like this, like the cog of a wheel, and you end up with the end result, which is this. I'm going to learn how to love. And when I learn how to love, I'm going to be effective, I'm going to be fruitful in my knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May God give us the grace in the weeks ahead to understand this, so we can work out our salvation with fear and trembling, realizing that it is God who is at work in us, for His glory.

Let's pray. Father, help us to be reminded that we don't need to reconcile friends. The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are two truths, two sides of the same coin that we must be committed to and to teach. And may You give us the grace to understand. Father, help us to understand the magnificence of the life that you have called us into, this divine calling of the implantation of your divine grace in salvation and regeneration. And then, Father, help us to understand what our duties are—to make every effort and to add to our faith. May we commit ourselves to that process so that the end result will be that we will be more effective and more fruitful in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen."